

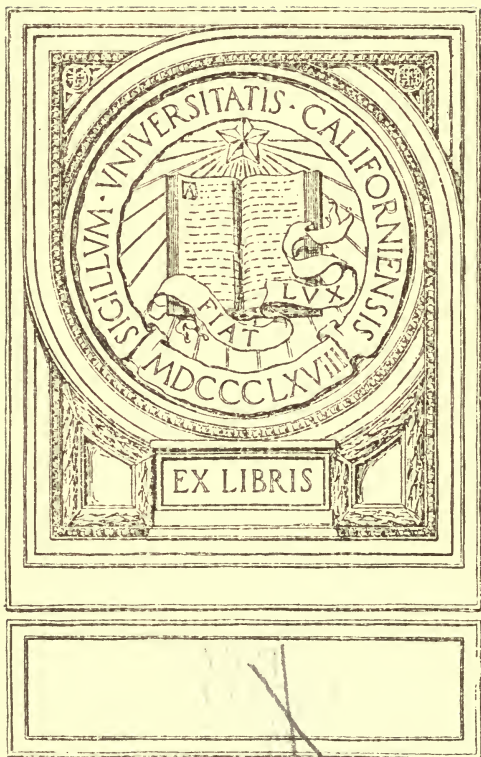


JEHOVAH

By

CLEMENT WOOD





JEHOVAH

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

POETRY:

GLAD OF EARTH

THE EARTH TURNS SOUTH

FICTION:

MOUNTAIN: A Novel

E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY
NEW YORK

JEHOVAH

BY
CLEMENT WOOD



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MAIN

CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. THE COVENANT UNDER SINAI . . .	3
II. THE WINNING OF THE MOUNTAIN . .	18
III. THE BEAST FROM THE RIVER . . .	23
IV. A WOMAN OF TYRE	30
V. THE SWORD IN THE STORM	41
VI. THE BLOOD DOOM	49
VII. THE MARCHING OF THE GIANTS . .	58
VIII. SEVEN DAYS	69
IX. THE KING'S WORD	78
X. THE DREAM OF ZADOK	86
XI. A PROPHET IN ISRAEL	96
XII. THE GOD GROWS	105
NOTES	115

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JEHOVAH

THE PERSONS

THE HEBREWS

JOAB, *chief of the hosts of David, and nephew to the king*

ABISHAI, *Joab's brother*

BENAIAH, *mightiest of the host*

JEHOSHAPHAT, *chief recorder of the king*

ZADOK, *one of the two high priests of the king*

JOTHAM, *of Succoth in Gilead, an insurgent prophet*

THE KENITE ENVOYS

Uz, *the patriarch*

SHAAPH, *the singer*

JETHER, *the warrior*

Time: B. C. 1034, the crest of David's conquering reign

Place: An opening in the wilderness southwest of Edom. The forces of David, in their swing of southern conquest, are met by envoys from the Kenites, a tribe dwelling around Mount Sinai. The envoys ask peace instead of subjection for the tribe, on the ground that it served Jehovah even before Moses learned the worship from his father-in-law, Jethro the Kenite.

JEHOVAH

I. THE COVENANT UNDER SINAI

1

Joab, the leader of the hosts of David,
The king's own nephew, and the craftiest man
In all that tide that scoured the southern deserts
To bring all peoples under the swelling rule
Of Israel and Jehovah, answered at last.
"Well, speak your word," he grudged to the Kenite
envoys.

The oldest rose: a claw-hand whipping free
His goat-hair mantle, till a sapless face,
Shrivelled to black eyes scorching them sullenly,
Broke clear, opened a beak-like mouth, and spoke:

"I, Uz the Kenite, saw the thing!
My live eyes looked thru eyes long dead,
This tongue is shaken with the words
Of lips crumbled to drifting sand.

"I speak the words that Tirath the Kenite spoke,
Tirath, a stripling, who lay at Jethro's feet,

JEHOVAH

When that head priest of Jehovah called to his knees
Aaron and all of the elders, as he made
Them and the desert children the blood sons
Of thundering Jehovah! I speak the words
That Tirath, old and dying, told to Jair,
And Jair, as he was dying, shared with Jahdai,
And he, the ancient head priest, whispered to me,
A learner before Jehovah. Listen well!

2

“ Before the Mount of Jehovah opens a plain,
Rising to two gate-hills. Tirath lay stretched
Upon the sunset one, wearied and winded.
He had run long and swiftly, and he lay
Watching the winding rocky bed below him,
That nested wrathful floods in the rainy months,
Flown now, leaving a boulder-cluttered passage
Slicing the riven hills, two tawny tent-walls
Spreading apart to the sky. Wearied, he slept.

“ And then he woke—and for a wavering moment,
As sleep held close the curtains of his soul,
He thought the rainy months had come again:
An uneven flood washed down the rocky bed,
An uneasy muddied river. His vision righted.
Between the gate-hills cleaving to Sinai's plain
A flood of men and women and children pushed,
A river of driven cattle and herded sheep,
Roaring thru the defile, dividing the hills.
A noise of broken shouting, tired singing,

THE COVENANT UNDER SINAI

Lowling, bleating, the incoherent brawl
Of a swollen hill-stream, lifted to his ears.
And Tirath fastened his shirt and his sandal thongs,
And fled from the sunset hill to the tent of Jethro,
And told of this queer stream the dry months brought.

“ These were your fathers, O children of David!
These were the desert brethren of Moses,
Loin-seeds of Abraham, Isaac, Israel,
Choosing Jehovah—chosen of Jehovah! ”

3

The beak-mouth closed, the hot eyes hooded them-
selves,
Abruptly turning to face the broken South,
Staring as if thru hill and empty desert
To that far mount of his god.

David's head captains,
Joab and Abishai, his own brother's sons,
And huge Benaiah, mightiest of the host,
Nodded in tardy agreement; and the rest,
The strong men and recorders, bowed after them;
And a forced murmur struggled from them: “ True!
These were our fathers.”

Uz began again,
As if his claw hand painted against the sky
The distant things he saw. “ So Tirath knew them,
And saw that strange procession wind to the mount—

JEHOVAH

A moving people clothed in the sacking of slaves,
Yet wearing mantles of tattered Memphian silk,
Caught fast with briars; and the thong-scarred arms
Heavy with Egyptian bracelets of red gold
And noisy jewels. Jethro came to meet them,
His daughter, Moses' wife, with her two boys
Shrinking behind, so timidly joyful to see
The husband she had god-sped to far Egypt
Back, and unharmed. Moses bowed to the ground
Before the priest of Jehovah, then straightened himself
And kissed his cheek, and went into his tent.
Tirath went too; there Moses spoke these things:

4

A Song of the Flight

It is done! Jehovah gloriously triumphed—
All our foes are scattered by his storming anger,
And we are his children now and evermore!

I stole down to Egypt, and I found my people—
They who had been princes of the rolling grasslands—
Lashed and hopeless captives, bricklayers, ditch-diggers,
Scorned and cowed. I told them of the god of Sinai,
He who holds the mountain and its fiery tempests,
He whose raging power I had seen and pondered
When I watched your sheep under his awful summit.
So I told my people the thundering god would save
them. . . .

What did peaceful Egypt know of flaming thunder?

THE COVENANT UNDER SINAI

What could fertile plainlands guess of wild Jehovah?
If he shook his shaggy head, and roared against them,
All their jackal gods would whine away in terror!

And my people heard me—for the land was restless
From a year of horror, plagues and direful griefs.
And one bloody midnight out our thousands hastened,
Leaving red reminders we were men, not cattle!
Bearing spoils—these bracelets, silks and crimson
raiment—
For their noble owners would not need them further.

Then we reached the sea—but our flight grew slower,
And the cowed and wearied people lagged and mur-
mured.

And we heard behind us now the ominous thunder
Of the pharaoh's horsemen, and his creaking chariots.
“Has your hill-imp led us to this sea—to perish?”
“No!” I cried. “Jehovah—look!—is here above you!”
For a growling storm-cloud pulsed and swelled and
threatened,
And a flash within it showed Jehovah watched us!

Then the east wind bellowed all the tossing night-hours,
Till the sea was riven, and the damp sand beckoned!
All the night we stumbled over the perilous passage,
While Jehovah's anger lashed the frightened heavens.

Then the dawn. The foemen saw the slaves escaping,
Rode and drove and stumbled onto the perilous passage.

JEHOVAH

Frightened horses floundered, sand clenched tight the
chariots,—
And Jehovah quieted the raging winds—and back
Swirled the chidden water in a driven turmoil,
Till the pharoah's horsemen and his creaking chariots
All were overwhelmed in the watery death.

So it was Jehovah gloriously triumphed,
Hurling horse and rider in the sea—to perish,
Scattering the enemies of the sons of Abraham,
Isaac, and Israel—this our god has done.
So it is forever we have chosen Jehovah
As our god, and he takes us for his children,
Still to lead us onward to the land of Canaan,
To the land I promised, in the great one's name.

Chief of gods, we serve him! There is no god greater
Than the god of Israel, Sinai's great Jehovah!

5

He ceased; and there was silence. Joab sat
Twiddling a leather tassel on his buckler,
His face granite. Benaiah's eyes froze open,
Watching the ancient envoy. "Moses said that?"

Another tongue broke in, ringing like silver
Tapped for a signal, precise and musical,
Yet too precise—Jehoshaphat, the chief
Recorder of the king. "Moses said that,
Or most of it. So the law runs."

8

THE COVENANT UNDER SINAI

But Uz

Eyed the harsh granite face, and spoke again:
"No, all of it—for Tirath heard it all,
And so I have it. Jethro lifted his joy,
'Now do I know our Jehovah greatest of gods!'
For he was ours, remember, from his beginning.
Then Jethro made a burnt offering, till the savor
Grew sweet in Jehovah's nostrils, as he leaned
Out of his heaven to share the pungent feast
Prepared by his faithful children; and Jethro called
Aaron and all of the elders to eat bread
With him before the god, and become his children.
Then the priest taught to Moses Jehovah's ways,
And how to judge the people; and he sent him
To find upon the mount the graven laws
Jehovah ordered.

6

"And the time drew on
When scowling clouds drove northward. 'You may go;
Jehovah wills it,' Jethro told him. Moses
Bade him farewell. 'For we go on to Canaan,
The land I promised in the great one's name,
And look—Jehovah, in his cloud, will lead us!'

"But Jethro pondered, and said: 'He will not lead you;
His storming mountain is his eternal home,
For so he swore when first he won it. Yet
His angel—a cloud by day, a flame by night—
Will point the tedious journey to your goal.'

9

JEHOVAH

“‘It will be tedious?’

“‘Long and full of dangers,
A land for iron swords, not jingling bracelets.
There are great men, and great gods, there before you,
Giants and sons of giants, sky-piercing towns—’

“‘Could we live here among you?’

“‘The land is small,
The herbage cropped clean in the dusty season;
You shall go forth; Jehovah’s angel is with you.’

“Moses came closer. ‘Let us have a guide,—
Hobab, your son. If he will go before,
Eyes for our blindness, he shall be a prince
Among us.’ So it was.

“Now came the hour;
Moses stood out, and cried aloud to the sky,
‘Rise up, Jehovah! Let thine enemies
Be scattered! Let them that hate thee flee before
thee!’

The shrine, borne on a litter—the graven laws
Carried within—moved forward. Down the plain
The flood of men and women and children pushed,
The river of driven cattle and herded sheep
Filled the defile between the guarding hills.
The dulling roar of shout and psalm and tumult
Faded away; the hill gap opened and swallowed
The last drab stragglers—and the trodden plain,

THE COVENANT UNDER SINAI

That had been carpeted with crawling life,
Lay empty as a goblet drained and dried.

“These were your fathers, warriors of David!
These were the wandering brethren of Moses,
Loin-seeds of Abraham, Isaac, Israel,
Chosen of Jehovah—choosing Jehovah!”

II. THE WINNING OF THE MOUNTAIN

1

Sour Joab, leader of the hosts of David,
Had sat with scornful face thru the long story.
He leapt to his feet, before the lips of Uz
Had time to lock,—driving his two-edged sword,
Three cubits in the blade, into the ground.
His moon-eyes glared upon the shriveled hulk
That spoke for the Kenites. “What talk is this?” he
cried.

“Jehovah on Sinai? His eternal home?
You do not know the god you spend such breath on!
He dwells on Zion—in Jerusalem!
Is it not so, recorder?”

Jehoshaphat

Narrowed his eyes; he stored no harvest of love
For this too-ready tool of the distant king.
“I could say ‘yes’ to you, and not say all;
I could say ‘no,’ and still not err completely.
The law says, as this winter-blighted Uz
Has told, Jehovah’s angel led the tribes
Out of the desert, into the land of promise.
When Deborah judged the land, and smote the Canaan-
ites,
Jehovah hastened from Sinai to aid his people.

THE WINNING OF THE MOUNTAIN

And prophets and mighty men have journeyed there
To talk with the god of Israel. . . . Hear me further:
When the great plague ravaged the tribes, King David
Saw in a vision the angel of death approaching,
Sickling his grass; and saw Jehovah stay him
Over the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite.
There, there he saw Jehovah; and Gad the prophet—
A voice of God, not a mere braying wind-storm
Like that mad Jotham that skulks within the villages—
Ordered the king to build an altar there
Unto our god; you, Joab, know this well.
There stands the altar on the mount of Zion,
In holy Jerusalem; there Abiathar
And Zadok, the king's priests, consult the god
Before the ephod; the temple will be there,—
And there Jehovah dwells in all his splendor!"

2

The line of Kenites crescented round Uz
Shook like a curtain teased by a sudden wind;
A sultry murmur buzzed among them. At last
The eldest again stepped forth. "We have heard the
recorder;
Yet kings may err like ordinary men."
His glowing black eyes scorched them straightly.
"Heed!

You are sons of Jehovah; so you may hear further.
Profane ears can not hear these secret things.
We stretch a hedge-hog's skin on the full udders
Of cows, that serpents may not suck—so we

JEHOVAH

Stretch the taut skin of silence over our lips
Upon these matters, lest unbelieving serpents
Listen and learn Jehovah's hidden things.
Yet you may hear. This youth—" he laid a paw,
Skinny and lizard-like, upon the head,
Sun-golden, of a boy beside him,—“ is Shaaph,
The son's own son of Jahdai. You have said
That your King David sings before the Lord;
We say that Shaaph can charm summer's young doves
Out of their nests, and rival the soft song
Of winds rocking the lily-buds to sleep.
He knows the songs of Jehovah; he will sing you
How this great hunter won Mount Sinai first,
And of his oath. This also—" as the boy
Quietly came, at his call. "Jethro you know of;
Now his grandfather's father was Jehovah—
A man, as you and I; or more than we,
Six cubits tall, a giant—yet a man.
And what he was, and what he did, these songs
Tell, in the words of men who knew him, felt
His playful stroke that doubled them to the earth,
And knew him even after he won his mountain.
Now, Shaaph."

The boy came slowly, gravely forward, |
Sky in his eyes, sun in his hair. Softly
He struck stray notes, then all at once his voice
Soared in the song of Sinai and Jehovah.

THE WINNING OF THE MOUNTAIN

3

Jehovah Wins His Mountain

Jehovah was a mighty man, twelve spans tall!
His face was like a desert lion, his legs like rooted oaks;
His spear was nine full cubits long; his blow could
brain a bear;
The valleys trembled at his tread, the hills bowed low!

The hills were humbled where he walked—but one stood
straight:

The Mount of Sinai trembled not, its echoes mocked
his tread.

“Go not upon that hill,” they cried. “It is the hill of
Sin,

Of Sin who rules the ancient moon, the father of the
gods!”

Jehovah laughed a rumbling laugh that made men
quake;

“I’ve climbed upon its baldest peak—and seen no
skulking god!”

“But not at night; the blackest night his spirit guards
each stone—

And when the moon is full, to climb is death—chill
death!”

Jehovah laughed a rumbling laugh that made **rocks**
dance.

Jehovah

"I need a hill to live upon—and storms can quench the moon.

I go to-night—the moon is dark—to test his spirit, learn
What Sin, who fires the feeble moon, will dare tell me!"

The night was black as raven's down, the stars shrunk
small;

Jehovah left the valley tents, their crimson watchfires
glowing;

And as he made the lowest steep, the howls of beasts
broke round him.

Jehovah's laughter thundered once—the black night
hushed.

Jehovah climbed the second height—the air grew thick,
His eyes went blind, his body swayed, his great spear
fell and shivered.

He plunged ahead, tearing the trees and rocks apart—
still climbing—

Until he reached the third steep, with the last peak next!

He touched the great lone naked stone that pierced
Sin's sky,—

And all at once his heart became a chilling, gripping
torment.

Why had he dared this throw with death? Dead bones
grew white and brittle;

There still was time to plunge to life—those far tent
fires—

Then suddenly he saw . . . This was the last stern
test!

THE WINNING OF THE MOUNTAIN

He bade his heart scorch warm again, he swung and
clambered upward,
From crack to crevice, till the crest lay gray and flat
beneath him.
Sinai was his,—at least until the moon shone full.

Sinai was his! Within the blackness storm clouds grew,
The thunder sang, the lightning split the solid head of
darkness.
And by the storm Jehovah swore, that, could he win the
mountain,
His feet would never leave it—it, his own hill home!

The tribesmen stared in horror at the man's mad deed.
“Great Sin has spared you once—the gods will play at
times with men.
But tempt him not again—” Jehovah's eyes were
granite pebbles.
“At full moon I shall seek the god—and win Sin's
hill!”

The pallid crescent swelled, until the moon's round
shield
Hung on the wall of heaven; the uneasy cattle lowed,
The sheep bleated, the troubled men moved the tents
further off. . . .
And great Jehovah knew the night, and sought Sin's
crest.

He bore a sword of beaten iron, of eight spans length;
He bore a spear with iron head, mightier than the first;

JEHOVAH

He bore a buckler, and a knife keener than winter cold;
He left the empty plain, he stood beneath Sin's hill.

The moonlight lay like silver dew on rock and whim-
pering leaf. . . .

His withered shadow crouched and cowered, fearing the
silver fire.

And all the stars were thin with dread—the night was
heavy with light,

A hateful beautiful light, like sunlight drained of its
living gold

A dead and hateful light: but off to the south Jehovah
saw

A scar of black, a low-grown cloud, climbing the moon-
white sky.

“It climbs as I,” he marveled. “Let it mount, and
shroud the sky,

As I shall shroud this ancient god in my great arms.”

Out of the the night two lions sprang, with frightful
sibilant rush.

The sword crashed twice, biting the marrow—and
broke within his hand.

Thrown by an unseen giant, a rock vast as a tent fell
on him;

But he stood taut, with buckler raised—the stone slid
off.

Jehovah drove the spear-point at the hid giant's heart;
It splintered—and he mounted still. A leopard sprang
upon him—

THE WINNING OF THE MOUNTAIN

And, caught on the lifted knife, screamed out a final gibberish warning.

He flung the knife away, and climbed the last great stone.

And now upon the flat gray crest he stood once more, Unarmed, wearied, sore,—when out of nothing hardened a form,

An ancient giant, with swirling beard that swept the moon-white stones—

And up the sky, Jehovah saw, that black cloud stole:

“What are you,” cried the moon-faced giant, “who dares death so?”

His long beard glowed. “Know you that I am Sin, the chief of gods?

Father of Shamash, god of the sun—and this my sacred hill?”

“But you have many hills—I would have this mine own.

“Listen, great Sin—what say you if we pit bare strengths—

God strength against man strength, and the stronger win the prize?”

“Back from this spot!” But suddenly Jehovah seized the god,—

And back and forth they clung and strained on the stone’s harsh floor.

Jehovah knew how to wrestle, with a fiend’s shrewd craft;

JEHOVAH

Barehanded once he had flung a giant thrice his size—
and killed him.

And soon, while that black cloud edged near, and
stained the moon's round splendor,
The two bowed, bent unto their knees, winded, half
spent.

“Now shall we rest?” Sin cried. “I'll bid that cloud
speed off—”

The lightning spit from out its heart, the growl of
thunder threatened,
The hill grew dark. “I cannot see,” cried Sin, “let
me make light!”
Jehovah laughed within himself, and bent Sin more.

And now he felt his knees bound with small live cords—
The moon god's swirling beard clung close, and rooted
him to the rock.

“If you will use it, so can I!” He caught the silvery
flood,
And laced it taut around the moon-giant's thin old neck.

The night grew blacker—all the moon was hid—winds
shrieked,

A tempest lashed the crest; still man and god strove
and struggled.

The hours inched on; the gray dawn flung its first thin
wavering promise;

The moon shone for a glimpse below the black cloud's
wing.

THE WINNING OF THE MOUNTAIN

But now the climb, and the long strain, had spent
man's strength;
Jehovah weakened, and the god's old fingers found his
throat,
Deeper and deeper clenching. "Fire of the cloud,"
Jehovah gasped,
"Sword of the lightning, strike!" It struck . . . the
god shook, dazed.

Loosed hand and voice. "Come let me fly, before day
dawns,
Or he who rules the sun will come and drive me out
forever!
My moon car sinks—" "The mount is mine?" Jeho-
vah cried in triumph.
"The mount is yours," said Sin; and rose and fled day's
light.

And then Jehovah stretched his height—the great god
conqueror!
And swore an oath by Sinai's storms never to leave its
summit!
And there he dwells in all his power, god of the thunder
and lightning,
God of the fiery tempest—god of our tribe, and yours—
Jehovah!"

JEHOVAH

4

Shaaph came to the end of the stirring song. The
Kenites

Echoed the close: "God of the fiery tempest,
God of our tribe, and yours—Jehovah!"

Joab

And all of the men of Israel sat for a time
Watching the sun poise on the desert's rim,
Red-eyed and swollen, then loiter out of sight,
While crimson curtains of glory covered the sky.
Benaiah broke the red silence, speaking low:
"Yes, he was a mighty man."

"Not our Jehovah,"

Joab tagged on, yet with a glow in his voice
Lit by the song. "We know no vow like this.
If your Jehovah made it, how could he come
In aid of Deborah?" He drove out the question,
Then leaned back proudly; there was a crafty trap!

Uz did not pause. "He left his mountain often,
But not to live. He was a hunter, remember;
He hunted from one sky-rim to the other.
Shall Jether, here, sing of his mighty slayings?"

But Joab shook his head. "The sun is hid,
Our men are uneasy with hunger. When we have
eaten,
It will be time to hear these marvelous deeds!"

III. THE BEAST FROM THE RIVER

1

The Kenites gathered first at the council place,
Where now a young fire burned, the red-gold flames
Crackling and quarreling. The Israelites came.
Each saw the other reddened by the glare,
As if the crimson sun had left this reminder
To warm the dark. Glum Joab, who led the host,
Field silence; but Benaiah, a kindlier chief,
Who had lifted up his spear and slain three hundred
Hated Philistines at one killing, spoke
In greeting. "Let us hear your singers further.
We would learn more of this man-god Jehovah,
Who seems so like, and so unlike, our own.
The king's recorder teaches me that the law
Tells of this covenant beneath Mount Sinai.
'Jehovah made not this covenant with our fathers,
But with us here, who are all alive this day,'
Said Moses. Yet we know not your Jehovah—
Half man, half god—man first, god-conqueror,
And lastly god himself. Speak further of him."

"You shall hear Jether sing the wondrous slayings
Of this great hunter, Jehovah. Heed his song!"

JEHOVAH

Jether arose, a fighter whose either arm
Could hurl a boulder a hundred cubits, with strength
To kill as it struck. Thus he began, and sang:

2

The Slaying of the Beast

Lift up your voices in praise—
Praise to the hunter, Jehovah!
Swift as the roe in the chase,
Bold as the leopard in daring,
Strong as the lion in his leap!
Praise to the slayer, Jehovah!

Who is this steals thru the shadowy wood,
Quiet as the shadow of leaves on a pool,
Hairy of face, and as shaggy of head?
This is Jehovah, the slayer of beasts!

Once let the shaft leave his terrible bow,
Antelope, fallow deer, roe and wild bull,
Even the unicorn, loftiest of prey,
Grow into venison's savory meat!

Swarms of wild boar know the bite of his shot—
Leopard and bear fear the terror that flies;
Lions, and wolves, their jaws red from the feast,
Die by their prey—with the shaft in their hearts!

Lift up your bows at his name—
He is the hunter, Jehovah!

THE BEAST FROM THE RIVER

Swift as the swallow in flight,
Fierce as the hawk in his darting,
Strong as the eagle—to kill!
Praise to the slayer, Jehovah!

Mighty Jehovah, the slayer of beasts,
Tired of the slaughter of creatures so small.
“Where is a prey that a hunter may seek
Worthy his utmost, most arduous toil?”

Maon, the wise man, whose years were as sand,
Answered him: “There is one beast that no hunter
Ever has sought—and no slayer can slaughter:
The beast from the river—the behemoth beast!”

“Yet I will seek him!” Jehovah replied.
Turning from Maon, he journeyed three moons
Till he had come to the edge of the stream
Where the great behemoth wallowed and slept.

This is the mightiest of beasts.
Behold, he will drink up a river,
Devour all that moves in a land,
Still rage in thirst and in hunger!
He has no like, east or west—
Behemoth, mightiest of beasts!

When the first Baal made beasts of the land,
After long toil he grew sore of the task.
“All I have left I will shape in one beast—”
Lo, what was left was as high as a hill!

JEHOVAH

Yet he had spoken—and out of the heap
Baal made behemoth, tall as a mountain.
Nothing remained to be shaped for a mate—
Lonely it dwelt in the hills and the fens.

There in the river Jehovah could see
Behemoth breathing, a slumbering hill.
Back to the forest he hastened, and cut
Lebanon's kingliest tree, for a bow;

Circled by Tyre, and uncorded the fleets,
Twisting the rope for a string; as the shaft,
Took a tall oak from his mountain—and came
Back to the edge of the behemoth's stream.

Still the beast slumbered. Jehovah laughed once,
And his great thunder voice wakened the prey.
Startled, it rose, till its back rasped the clouds—
Then toward the hunter it started its course.

Now was the time, while the eye of the beast,
Dazed by the sunlight, blinked open. His bow
Rested at foot on the earth, while the top
Pressed on the wall of the sky. Taut he drew

Bow-string, his hand on the shaft-notch—he aimed
At the sun-eye of the beast—and let go!
Straight as a bee in its flying it sped,
Clear to the heart of the menacing eye!

THE BEAST FROM THE RIVER

Lift up your joy at the shot
Made by the hunter, Jehovah!
Straight to the threatening eye
Hastened the shaft of his slaughter.
Never a hunter like him!
Praise for the slayer, Jehovah!

Out leapt the blood, like a hill-stream in spring
Swollen with burden of snow in its melting.
Both eyes were blinded—and straight toward the sea-
way
Floundered the beast, with the death-shaft still in!

Over the sea leant a mountainous cliff;
And the blind beast crashed in death from its height.
Blood from his agony dyed the sea red—
Still it is red from the behemoth's blood.

Then a vast tidal wave rolled on the land;
Great ships at sea broke and sank from the tossing;
And the beast's carcass, a huge slaughtered island,
Floated out over the rim of the sea.

He, the god-slayer, for sign of his deed
And token of triumph, hung in the sky
This his great bow, inlaid with rich jewels—
Jasper and emerald, beryl and agate.

Onyx and amethyst, sapphire and diamond,—
Stretching the sky, from one rim to the other. }

JEHOVAH

Still you can see it in all of its splendor,
After Jehovah has thundered in tempest!

Lift up your voices in praise,
Praise to the hunter, Jehovah!
For he has slaughtered the beast,
Slain the great mountain-like behemoth.
Praise you his bow in the sky—
Praise the great slayer, Jehovah!

3

Jehoshaphat, the king's recorder, rose
After the song of Jether reached its ending,
His thin face working in its eagerness.
"Now there the law is different from your song.
We learn Jehovah placed his bow in heaven
After the flood he sent over all the earth
To wash wickedness away. He spared one man,
One good man, Noah; and he promised him,
After the flood had lessened, and the waters
Were gone from the mountains, and Noah built an altar,
And the savor was sweet within Jehovah's nostrils,
He promised him to send no other flood
To waste the earth and man; and for a token
He set his bow in a cloud, for a reminder
Of what he swore."

Old Uz the Kenite pondered
And spoke: "At least, Jehovah set his bow
In the heaven, as a token,—and if a bow

THE BEAST FROM THE RIVER

He must have been a hunter. For the rest,
We sing the song who best should know the song."

The Israelites were silent; Jehoshaphat
Worried his mind, weighing these bows and floods;
The others waited his word. But lordly Joab
Laughed at the man's discomfort. "It is true,
A bow must mean a hunter. Tell me further.
Perhaps your god—or man—whichever you will—
Desired a woman—or more; for mighty ones
Are mighty in loving too."

There was no smile
At his broad jest; for only Joab dared mock
The amorous king, with his growing brood of women,
The daughters of strange lands and stranger gods,
And last Bath-Sheba, whose husband Joab had placed,
At the king's word, within the front of the troops,
And left him to perish. Thus Joab dared his joke.
"Did Jehovah lust for a woman?"

The face of Uz
Lit like an ancient parchment in front of a candle.
"Come, Shaaph, again—and sing the song they call
for."

IV. A WOMAN OF TYRE

1

Shaaph, at the summons, lifted his dreaming fancies
Back from the glowing crimson heart of the coals.
His eyes were sunset heavens, flame upon blue,
His hair tassels of dusky gold. He tested
His harp, and then began; and as he sang
The flame, red-glowing, became the warp of his song:

2

A Song of Jehovah's Desire

The silver trumpets of spring
Pealed thru the valleys;
Their faint echoes climbed to the peaks.
The armies of the grass
Lifted together their green spear-heads,
Clashing them.
The golden arms of the willows beckoned,
The hill-stream was a torrent,
And valley and hill shook with an old disquiet,
The stir of mating!

Jehovah spoke from his hill:
"I will get me a wife—

A WOMAN OF TYRE

This is the season of wiving.
Yet among the daughters of Midian
There is none that pleases me,
Nor among the cow-eyed women of the Kenites.
I am tired of the harlots of Edom,
And the limp breasts of Gaza.
There is but one for whom I long—
She whom I saw in the temple at Tyre,
She whom they call Asherah of Tyre.

“When my heart dwells upon her,
I tremble like the shadow of a bird
On rippled water.
My body is flame striving with ice;
My limbs weaken; I thirst greatly.
I have no joy in the day,
I have no rest in the night.

“I shall journey to Tyre, to the temple,
To Asherah, for whom I long!”

3

A Song of Asherah

Who is this who stands upon the wharves,
Above the quarreling waves,
A giant among children?
His face is an angry lion,
His shoulders are twin hills,
His legs are young cedars of the mountain.

JEHOVAH

His wrath is a hungry lion—
He has lifted up his spear in anger
And slain a thousand of the guardians of Baal!

He comes toward me, thru the people,
Like a sun dividing clouds,
Like an oak striding thru brambles.

I shall withdraw into the court,
And veil myself in subtle things.

4

A Song of Jehovah

Return with me to my mountain,
To Sinai, home of the storm-clouds!
Here, where you dwell, it is the time of sowing;
The mating songs of birds
Thrill in sweet incompleteness.

Where you are not, it is winter—
Naked trees lift shivering arms in prayer,
Knowing they can not green but at your coming.
The bear sleeps on, the grasshoppers do not awake,
There is a frozen death without you.

5

A Song of Asherah

What are you, Jehovah of the hill?
Why should I hear you?

32

A WOMAN OF TYRE

Ashtoreth, they say truly—old cow god—
Is the mother of all;
I am the lover of all.
From the four corners of the sky they come,
My lovers come, to press my proud bosom.
In blue and vermilion they are clothed,
Kings, and the gods of kings:
Chemosh, the great lord of Moab,
Milcolm, the mighty slayer of Ammon,
And Dagon, man head and fish body,
A terrible god, swimming from Philistia.
Bel-Marduk, the lord of wide rivers,
Left the bed of his mate in Babylon;
Osiris came up from Egypt,
Riding bridled leviathan.

There was one among them, Baal of Tyre,
The god of seeding and harvest,
Who made the dust blossom.
He was the guardian of great fleets,
Lacing the earth's waters.
From the four corners of the sky
He brought their traffic to me—
Slaves from the land of blue-skinned men,
The land whose bowels are tin;
Spikenard, cassia, ebony and myrrh
Out of the eastern sky-rim;
Ivory and apes from the burnt south,
Jewels frozen in the north.
They have set my images, to honor me,
In all the ways of the world,

JEHOVAH

Wherever green grows.
And this great Baal, god of Tyre,
Of blossom and harvest, of landway and seaway,
I took for my lover.

He is terrible in war!
He has conquered two hundred kings,
And cut off their thumbs and their great toes
As a tribute for me.
He has conquered a thousand rulers of provinces,
And made them eunuchs to wait upon me.

What are you, Jehovah of the wastes?
Go back to your little hill.
I am the lover of all,—
I am the lover of Baal of Tyre!

6

Jehovah's wrath grew like an autumn fire.
The sky darkened in terrible frowning,
His thunder voice reached over the Tyrian sea,
Even to the twin gates of the western waters.
The breast of the deep heaved and trembled.
The lightning flamed from out his eyes,
And the fleets of Baal's ships
Burst into flames and tumult,
And sank into the beaten waters.

Jehovah's wrath calmed;
He turned to the woman of his desire, and spoke:

A WOMAN OF TYRE

A Song of Jehovah

Where is Baal, guardian of his fleets?
He shall sink where his fleets are!

Well for him that he is on a journey,
Leading his valorous thousands
Against some saucy village!

What if he wall you up
Here in his island city?
This night Sinai's stormy summit
Shall pillow your head!

Strong is a lion in his leap,
And strong a man in his desire.
I long for you
As a parched grassland
Aches for the soothe of rain;
As the heart of a harlot of Nineveh
Grasps at the pay of her harlotry;
As the antelope longs for the mountain,
As the speared fish pants for the lake.

Strong am I in desire,
And stronger to win my desire.
Are you not fairer than all women?
Even so is my strength among men!

The silver waves of dreams
Lapped round the drowsy walls
Of the island city of Tyre;
One only watched, unsleeping,
In the court of the temple—Asherah!

But the night-sky woke and shivered,
As a storm-cloud out of the south
Rushed over the deadened city,
And poised above the temple.

Asherah hid in the darkness,
Beneath one lamp in the courtyard,
As the terrible giant strode down
Out of his cloudy chariot;
His hair was wild as the storm-cloud,
His eyes were gleaming lightning!

“Come forth!” he cried in triumph,
Reaching an arm to grasp her,—
Yet his arm froze, untouching:

White and terrible she stood there,
As a sudden lion on a turning;
Her eyes looked scorn at his weakness,
His glad strength thinned and withered.

And then her eyes grew soft:
She swayed toward him in the darkness,

A WOMAN OF TYRE

And a dove's soft whisper reached him:
"Jehovah, I too desire!"

8

Shaaph paused.

"Well sung!" cried Benaiah.

Jehoshaphat
Lifted a worried face toward him. "But this
Is forbidden! Jehovah was no lover of Asherah!
The man is as mad as a prophet raving in Judah!"

Benaiah shook his head. "Strange things have been
In Jerusalem,—and stranger will be. If David
Marry the daughters of Tyre, and the daughters of
Egypt,
Why ban his god from this? Would you have him a
eunuch?"

Joab laughed too. "I like a tractable heifer.
Widowed by force! Her place is in Jerusalem,
With Abigail and Bath-Sheba. The king is merciful
To widows—even those not of his making."
He laughed again—a lone, metallic mirth
Like pebbles dancing in an urn,—the laugh
Of a man whose daring leapt from stabbing princes
To taunting death by jesting of the king.

Benaiah turned to the singer. "Why do you pause?
Was this the end of the matter?"

Then Shaaph sang on:

JEHOVAH

9

A Song of Jehovah

I shall build a temple upon my mountain,
Upon the storming crest of Sinai,
Where I can worship you, O my lover!
Where all the world can worship you,—
Where moon and stars can worship you!

A Song of Asherah

I am the temple of love, O my lover,—
Enter into the temple!

Behold, there is a pleasant court before me,
With the sweet sounds of birds,
And the splash of fountains falling—
Enter into the court!

There is a hall beyond the court,
With pictures of battles done upon the walls,
Hung with rich blue and vermilion,—
Enter into the hall!

And there are rooms beyond the hall,
Pleasant to wander thru
And linger in—
Enter into the rooms!

A WOMAN OF TYRE

There is one inner room
I keep for myself.
A tiny room—
I have locked the door, and lost the key—
You cannot enter.

See, I have found the key!
The door is open.

10

A Song of Jehovah

Pillow her head, O long-haired clouds,
Pillow the rose of her cheek, O clouds,
As she sleeps in the tired dawn.

I have built her a house for her dwelling,
With ten thousand pillars of growing oak,
And ten thousand pillars of growing cedar.
The leaves of the roof make a sweet whispering,
The breezes hush as they pass,
For fear she should waken.

When she wakens, we flash together
Headlong across the cowed heaven,
Two flames grown one,
Two dreams grown one.

Here the eternal ache of spring
Pauses and loiters.

JEHOVAH

The sweet disquiet does not leave us;
Each moment lifts with fulfillment,
And teases with new, wild hunger!

Each moment is a step
Up an ascending stairway of raptures.
There is no end to the ecstasy,
Nor do the feet drag, nor the senses cool,
In the perilous climb.

We are far yet from the top—
Nor can we see the top.
How can we name what none may see?

There is a long sleep there,
But beyond the sleep—
Beyond—beyond—

V. THE SWORD IN THE STORM

1

The fire dulled, and grew ashen. The sweet song
Ended; the singer's voice thinned to an echo,
The harp-strings trembled to stillness. All who heard
Crushed close, and praised the singing—all but one,
Sour Joab. The other leaders wondered that he
Had spent this day in talking; his usual tongue
Had been the sharp flesh-cleaving edge of the sword.
They did not know that long ago the feet
Of a Cushite runner thumped on the dusty road,
Bearing a word for David's heart; for Joab
Remembered his saying, "but him who serves Jehovah
Put not to the sword." So Joab spoke his doubts,
Asking the king's word, or that the priests might seek
Jehovah's will thru the ephod.

Joab smoothed
His troubled face. "Joy to your amorous pair!
But night hours do not halt; and up the sky
Trudges that full moon your Jehovah saw,
The night he wrestled and conquered Sinai's god.
Yet do not pit him with an Israelite—
Our father Jacob strove with him, unvanquished.
Such are our tribesmen." He smiled a flinty smile.

JEHOVAH

“We shall not strive all night with you in singing—
There is to-morrow. What is life but this,—
A time to eat, to fight, and then to sleep,
With now and then a song to freshen our spirits?
To sleep, then. To-morrow I shall tell the will
Of David upon these matters.”

So they parted.

2

The day woke threatening; the sky was heavy,
Dismal, sunless. Yet the flash of metal,
The monotonous trudge of feet, woke with the grayness,
As David's further thousands took their places
In the expanding camp. The Kenites saw.
Was there indeed no limit to these spoilers?

“They are as many as the stars of heaven,”
Jether groaned softly.

But Uz unwrinkled a smile:
“Jehovah's clouds can sponge out stars and sky!”

The leaders met, and Joab began the speaking:
“You have been told, men of the Kenites, to bow
Your neck beneath the ox-yoke of King David
And Jehovah, god of the children of Israel.
You say you serve Jehovah; of that later.
But it is just that you should learn the fate
Of those who oppose the god-anointed ruler!

THE SWORD IN THE STORM

I cannot harp love-ditties; but I can tell
How many necks this sword has cracked and broken.
That I shall tell, in rough—but truthful—words.”

3

The Wasting of the South

“Go forth,” Lord David said to me,
“Bid all who live on plain or hill,
Even to Egypt’s borders, bow
Their necks to the ox-yoke of the king,
Their souls to the service of Jehovah!
If they refuse, then let his vengeance
Fall—that the lands may not forget
Either the king’s might—or the god’s!”

The doom against Gath: we ravaged the land,
Which would not follow the king’s word.
Four sons of the giant led against us,
Bearing great spears and new-wrought swords.
Their bodies garnish a vulture feast.
Their cities we took, their fields we burnt,
For David the king, and Lord Jehovah!

The doom against Syria: we smote
The king of Zobah, and took as spoil
A thousand horsemen, twelve thousand foot,
And David houghed the chariot horses,
Save twice a hundred, Jehovah’s share.
And all the Syrians bow as slaves
To David the king, and Lord Jehovah!

JEHOVAH

The doom against Moab: we made them all,
Children, women, and men, lie prone
Upon the ground, in three great lines.
For Moab defied the king, blasphemed
The god. And then these tried swords slew
The first and third lines, neck by neck,
Children, women, and men—let the second
Remember, as slaves, the keen-edged power
Of David the king, and Lord Jehovah!

The doom against Edom: their guilt was great,
So half a year we swept their fields
And villages, like an autumn wind
Lashing the lacy leaves; we slew
All of the males, sparing none,
Squaller in arms to failing grandsire.
They will not soon forget the might
Of David the king, and Lord Jehovah!

These are the dooms of Lord Jehovah,
Borne against Gath and Syria,
Moab, Ammon, Amelek, Edom,
And all the lands to the rim of Egypt.
Heed then the word of the king! Or hear
The word so many hear—of the sword
Of David the king, and Lord Jehovah!

4

“That is my song,” said Joab; and a sneer
Hung like a cloud above his words, a cloud
Heavy with threat and menace.

THE SWORD IN THE STORM

The Kenite ranks
Split like a brook on a rock, and from the midst
Four stooped and wrinkled grayheads solemnly stepped,
Bearing a litter, like an Egyptian ark,
And placed it before Uz. His hot eyes hooded,
His dried lips rattled a quiet word, and then
Reverently he spread the litter curtains,
And raised from its cushion a sword, a giant's weapon
Eight full spans!—taller than the tallest man
Who saw it; a huge nicked killer, rusted brown,
And crusted with something darker. As he raised it,
The weight humbled his old bent frame; he bowed,
Staggering three steps forward. Then he stopped,
Lifted the haft in air, and let the blade
Find its own scabbard in the yielding soil,
And tremble, erect.

The beak-like mouth of Uz
Opened, and words marched out in solemn step:
“Mighty is Jehovah, and mighty those that serve him!
Their cause is his, his sword is a sword before them—
And none can breast the havoc of its stroke!
You have sung mighty wars Jehovah waged
On Gath and Syria, Moab, Ammon, Amelek,
And hated Edom—and your own blade has fallen
Like pattering hail upon the humbled necks
Of enemies of the great one and King David.
Yet, Joab, is your sword a sword like this?
Eight full spans, topping your helmet—and its weight
Would disarm you before a silk-checked boy!
This is the sword of Jehovah!”

JEHOVAH

Old wrinkled Uz
Straightened at the words, till his stooped hulk became
A lone young fir-tree in a sheltered valley.
All eyes widened.

“This is the sword of Jehovah!
When he leapt forth to battle, it sprang before,
Ripping belly and cleaving skull. His arm
Alone could swing it; it has the scars of his fights,
Even the blood of his enemies dried upon it!
Only its blade have Jehovah’s foemen touched.
Safe thru the years our priests have guarded it. . . .
And with this sword do you think we could lose
Whatever war we waged? On our going forth
Its lightning thrust leaps first; it is a guardian
To sleeping camp and village. You have sung
Your wasting of the lands that hem our border
Here in the north; now I shall sing the song
Of this sword, and its smiting of its foes!”

5

The Sword Goes Forth

Children of Jehovah, split the sky in triumph!
Let your shouts set valley, mountain, sky, to ringing!
For the lord of tempests rose up in his anger,
Scattering his foemen as ashes in the wind!

First the god grew wrathful with his stubborn children,
He, our mountain shepherd, teaching love and justice,

THE SWORD IN THE STORM

Brotherhood, to brothers; we despised his teaching,
Wooed the evil Baals, till his anger waked.

And he sent his scourge, Hadad king of Edom,
Smiting all the Kenites, yes, and all of Midian.
Out of evil Avith Hadad brought his Baal,
Kos the vile, to trample all our shepherd lands.

Then we prayed in torment; and Jehovah heard us!
Hadad died in madness; feeble Samlah followed.
Battle trumpets rallied all the Kenite warriors,
And Jehovah led us with his sword of fire!

Twenty thousand bowmen marched before our army;
Thirty thousand spearmen followed with the slingers.
And we fell on Samlah in the land of Moab,
Fifty thousand battling with his hundred thousands!

Where we stood was cloudless; but the rain slashed
downward
Till the Edomite archers, bowstrings wet, were routed.
But the Edomite spearmen sought to overflow us,
Kos and feeble Samlah riding in their midst.

Then the sword from heaven left its cloudy scabbard,
Thundering in triumph as it smote and slew;
Smote the god, and hurled him, shattered and burned,
to earth;
Smote the king, and hurled him, scorched and charred,
to death!

JEHOVAH

All the sons of Edom turned and fled in tumult,
Leaving Kos in ashes, leaving Samlah dead.
Thus the sword of fire goes before our army,
Thus its foes are routed by the lightning's blade!

Children of Jehovah, let your shouts of triumph
Cleave the hills asunder, split the shining heavens!
For Jehovah's sword waits in its cloudy scabbard
To burn our foes, and fling them as ashes into the wind!

6

"That is our god: this is his sword," said Uz,
"An ancient iron remembrance to Jehovah
Of what he bore, before that vacant day
When clouds masked Sinai, and he rose to heaven,
His second home. Your swords have wasted Edom,
As his did once. But Jehovah, lord of shepherds
And tempests, watches us, never sleeping.
This, then, is our answer to your demands—"

Joab

Leant close, Benaiah and all the others listened
With ears intent.

Uz spoke a last word to Jether,
Who passed it round; the Kenites bowed agreement.
"Tell to King David that we serve Jehovah,
And have from his beginning. Tell him further
Jehovah's servants serve a lord of justice
And brotherhood to their brothers; they need not bow
Beneath a brother's ox-yoke; and by the covenant
Of Sinai we are his brothers. This is our answer."

VI. THE BLOOD DOOM

1

Upon the northern road the silken dust,
So thick it clutched the tops of the horses' hoofs,
Lay undisturbed. Joab looked back at last,
And answered them: "You say you serve Jehovah:
King David is his anointed servant, and those
Who serve the master, bow to his steward. You speak
Of covenants of brotherhood; the word
Of David I promise later on that matter.
But as to brotherhood, keep the main road,
Lest you be bogged in errors. You have a god,
You say, whose name is the same indeed as ours—
The selfsame god, by covenant, you say.
You say that this god slew a behemoth,
Poached a brisk harlot out of merry Tyre,
Smote Edom, killed venison, and I know not what.
These things may be, or not. We stuff the noses
Of ailing sheep with whittled twigs of John wood,
That they may sneeze, and shake off maggots and lice.
Now we shall stuff the word of truth between us,
That all lies may be cast. I am no singer,
But one song I remember—Joshua's song,
Sung by the leader who came after Moses,
Sung as the flames of Ai, that proud walled city,

JEHOVAH

Made merry with the clouds. Heed you this song,—”
And Joab’s voice was like a scarf of Nineveh
For softness,—“ for it holds lessons of the brotherhood
Jehovah loves.

“ Death is brother to life,
Doom is brother to sin;
Storm is brother to stillness,
Blood is brother to pride.

“ Grief is brother to joy,
Worm is brother to man;
Spear is brother to belly,
Sword is brother to skull!

“ Baal is brother to slaughter,
Israel brother to Israel—”

The hot words ceased. “ And now for Joshua’s song.”

2

The Way Opens

Up Nebo’s high summit one climbed in the daybreak;
From Nebo’s lone crest none returned to the people.
Thus Moses, beloved of Jehovah, has journeyed
Again to his fathers—and none saw his going.

Jehovah was still with his children, O people!
His word came to me in the whispering midnight,

THE BLOOD DOOM

To Joshua-ben-Nun, the least of his servants,
A word bright with glory, a word red with triumph!

“Go up to the land which Jehovah has promised—
Your bounds are the northernmost hills of the Hittites,
The great sea that lies toward the sun’s downward
going,
And turbid Euphrates, the river of rivers!

“All this you shall conquer with swordmen and spear-
men:

The spear and the sword shall not cease from their labor,
Nor spare man nor woman nor child in their killing,
Till all things that breathe you have slain for my glory!”

We marched in our might to the waters of Jordan,
With swords clean and thirsty, with spears bright and
hungry.

Before us lay Jericho, city of palm trees,
Asleep with its treasurers, and dead to its danger!

Jehovah once parted the sea’s foaming waters,
To save us, and drown Egypt’s horsemen and chariots:
And now his hand parted the rain-swollen Jordan,
Until we had crossed, to the uttermost tribesman!

We shall not forget what he did—for we built him
An altar, a stone for each tribe, on the stream’s rim.
Before us lay Jericho, asleep with its treasures,
And dead to its danger—and our swords were thirsty!

Jehovah

3

The Necks of Kings

Now tremble, men of Jericho!
Jehovah's hand is heaviest
When kings offend his high decrees!

King Sihon of the Amorites,
King Og of Bashan, where are they?
Their bones are picked—their lands are picked!

Jehovah's hand is heavy on kings!
Did not five kings of the Amorites
Conspire against Gibeon and Israel?

The kings of Jerusalem and Hebron,
The kings of Jarmuth, Lachish, Eglon,—
But we crept up all night from Gilgal,

And fell upon them like the lightning
Splitting a mountain fir; all day
We slew them; and the Lord flung stones

Of hail out of the storming heaven,
And slaughtered them by scores of thousands!
The night came close; and, to my prayer,

Jehovah froze the very sun
Stiff on the wall of heaven, and held
The moon motionless in the sky,

THE BLOOD DOOM

Until our bloody slaying was ended!
And these five kings,—I placed their necks
Flat on the ground—then all my fighters

Set their feet on the necks of kings.
So lie all enemies of the Lord!
And then I hanged them till they died.

Now tremble, men of Jericho!
Jehovah's hand is heaviest
When proud walled cities defy his will,

When kings in crimson flout his word;
Now yield your walls, your selves, your hearts,
Or meet Jehovah's crimson doom!

4

The Shining Man

Who shines in the dawn with the morning-star's bright-
ness,
This tall lonely warrior, between us and Jericho?
“Now say are you for us, great sir, or our foemen?”
“I captain the hosts of Jehovah,” he answered.

I fell on my face, my eyes blind at his splendor. . . .
“Jehovah has given you Jericho! City
And king, and the mighty men—all are for Israel!
And this is the way that Jehovah shall crush them:

JEHOVAH

“Let all of your armed men march once round the walls
Each day for six days, with the ark borne amid them,
And seven priests leading with trumpets, whose blowing
Shall cease not at all—while the people keep silence.

“The seventh day, seven full circuits—then quickly
The priests blow, the people break silence by shouting;
And lo, at the shouting, the proud walls shall crumble,
And thus will he give you the city—to ravage!

“Spare Rahab the harlot, who hid your two spies;
But all of the rest is accursed! None that breathe
Must breathe when you finish,—no stone on another!
Let Jericho perish forever—forever!”

He ceased from his speaking. We marched at his
bidding,
Once round for six days, seven times on the seventh,
The ark in the midst, and the priests' trumpets blowing,—
And I gave the word to the whole people: “Shout!”

5

The Sowing with Salt

They shouted—the walls fell! The mortar
Melted and flowed, the eternal stones
Shattered, as if the shameer worm,

The hewer of stones, had channeled them!
What had been walls and iron-barred gates
Was now ten thousand yawning roadways!

THE BLOOD DOOM

The clean swords drank till they were tipsy
With slaying; the hungry spears gorged on.
All men and women, young and old,—

Hobbling old men and romping youths,
Women whose infants mouthed their breasts,
And women ripe with child,—and ox,

And sheep, and horse, and ass, were butchered,
All things that breathed. The gold and silver,
Iron and brass, were saved for Jehovah—

Such was his will. The harlot Rahab
Was spared. And then a fire was lit,
With Jericho as its lordly fuel!

Pile on the chairs, the beds, the throne!
Fling on the curtains, silks, and rich stuffs!
Let the sweet savor of the burning

Climb to the nostrils of Jehovah!
Women and children and bloodied men
Dance round the fringes of the fire!

Lo, we have made of Jericho
A rich burnt offering to the Lord,
A fiery sacrifice to Jehovah!

When the last heated stone was cold,
And the wind flung abroad the ashes,
We took our plows and furrowed the land

JEHOVAH

And sowed a crop—lest any forget!
Seeds of salt we sowed in the furrows,
That no green thing might ever wake

Where sinful Jericho once had been!
Blood and death, and a barren soil,
These are the red doom of Jehovah!

6

The Curse

The curse of Jehovah on him who rebuilds
The city of Jericho! Loss of his first-born
Shall bind the foundations—the death of his youngest
Shall mortar the gates and the towering walls!

Spread on into Canaan! Jehovah before us,
The sword of his wrath as a scourge to our foemen,
What land or what sea, but his sons shall possess it?
What city of scorners our swords shall not lesson?

Spread on into Canaan! Jehovah has promised
All lands to his children. For those who defy him,
A sword for a mate, and the dust for a bride!
Spread on into Canaan—thence over the world!

7

The children of Israel raised a volleying shout,
“Great is Jehovah, mighty King David, and mighty
Joab, the chief of his hosts!”

THE BLOOD DOOM

He smiled at their tumult,
Unbending slightly; for praise is as sweet to the great
As to the humble.

Jether at last came forth,
Stepping a spear's length toward the seat of Joab,
Shaking his shaggy mane of hair, a scarred
Crag of a man, broader of shoulder than Joab.
His either weighty arm could hurl a boulder
A hundred cubits, killing as it struck.
He spoke: "You sing a lion-god's full slaying.
Jehovah, god of Sinai, god of tempests,
God of the shepherd tribes, of ours, of yours,
Has death within his quiver, when he draws
His lightning-arrows forth, to slay his foemen.
But would Jehovah tell his children to slaughter
All peoples everywhere? Is it in reason?
What good could distant lands be to your tribesmen?
Canaan, you say, is rich in herbage; then why
Seek further fields? Your sheep would die on the
journey,
Your flocks diminish. . . . It is well to smite
The walled towns which assail us shepherd folk,—
But would Jehovah have you live in them,
To bow to the Baal-abominations there,
To leave his open hills, his roofing stars
On halls carpeted with the green of summer,
For all a city's squeezing walls and rooms?
Did your chief Joshua consult Jehovah,
And have you heard aright the word of the god?"

VII. THE MARCHING OF THE GIANTS

1

Upon the northern road the silken dust,
So thick it clutched the spokes of the chariot wheels,
Lay undisturbed. Even while Jether spoke,
Answering, questioning, Joab's eyes twitched back
From the Kenite's scar-grooved face, to travel the road
And knock at the horizon-gate for a movement,
A stir, upon it. Cushite legs were strong;
Word should have come. . . .

He turned, eyes left the road,
Ears brought him back to the council. A new voice
Rumbled in answer to the shepherd warrior—
Benaiah, son of Jehoiada. He was one
Who had small love for Joab. Few love a tool,
Pliant to bend to any use; tho all
Might fear his power, who had dared to murder Abner,
Beloved of Israel, the uncle of Saul, and the leader
Of all his hosts,—murder him, too, when David
Had taken him to his bosom. So Israel hated
And shrank from Joab. Benaiah feared him not,
Nor anything. He had slain the two fierce sons
Of Ariel of Moab; he slew a lion
Barehanded, in a pit, on a snowy day;

THE MARCHING OF THE GIANTS

He killed an Egyptian giant five cubits tall,
With the man's own beamlike spear. What should he
fear—

Almost a giant himself, as huge as Jether. . . .
And all men loved him for his gentleness.
In the palace of King David, the king's small sons,
Shobab and Solomon, would ride his shoulders,
Parting his beard for reins,—so kindly he was.

It was Benaiah's rumble that Joab heard.
"But Jehovah dwells on Zion, in Jerusalem.
He dwells in a city—"

"Sinai is no city!
Your Moses met him there—your prophets seek him
Beyond the lonely desert, on the mount's crest!"

Benaiah tried again. "These distant lands
Are not for grazing sheep; the sons of Israel
War against those who do not serve Jehovah,
To bring the scoffer and scorner under his sway,
Take of his spoil for the temple, receive his tribute,
That Jehovah's name may be sweet in all the lands."

"He is God of our tribe—and yours; and not
A god of city dunghills!"

"He is the god,"
Suave Joab broke in, quicker with his tongue
Than Benaiah, "—of all the lands that he has con-
quered;

JEHOVAH

Canaan, Moab and Ammon, Amelek,
Edom, Syria, Gath—of all the lands
He promised Joshua,—from the sea to the river,
From the Hittite mountains to the southernmost hill.”

“And who will watch your sheep when you walk these
lands?”

Jether’s bewildered mind still groped.

Benaiah

Gestured slowly to Joab: “No, you have spoken.
It is Jehovah’s will that we, his children,
Shall never sleep within our beds, till all
Accursed races have been driven hence
To their destruction. I shall sing his battle
Against the Anakim, the hateful brood
Of giants, who strove against his will,—to show
How Lord Jehovah opens the roads of earth
Before the firstlings of his hand and heart.”

2

The Sons of Anak March

All the giants of old are gone: Arba dead and rotted;
Og was slain by Moses’ hand, Anak yields to worms;
Sheshai, Talmi, Ahiman, Judah’s Caleb slew them—
And Goliath, scourge of Gath, fell to David’s sling!

Anakim from Hebron,
Giants great and stately;

THE MARCHING OF THE GIANTS

Emim out of Moab,
Giants gross and mad;
Zam-zummim out of Ammon,
Giants vast and valiant;
Avvim out of Gaza,
Huge as Og of Bashan!

But Jehovah smote them,
Harried them, destroyed them—
Lopped them off like cedars
Sawyers have beheaded. . . .
Slaughtered are the Avvim,
Emim, Zam-zummim,
Anakim,—the giants
Now are hills of dust.

What are these that march like behemoths before the
army
Of the murderous Philistine, swarming up from Gath?
Four great forms, like striding pillars, clad in brazen
helmets,
Coats of mail, and swords of iron, new and terrible!

We have slain the giant of Gath, but his sons are
marching—
Ishbi-benob, Saph, and Lahmi—and the Unnamed One.
We have slain Goliath, but his brothers are upon us.
David, dare we face such foes? Death is marching
near!

JEHOVAH

Ishbi-benob—by his side what are we but grasshoppers?
Saph—can man assail a giant whose towers tear the sky?
Lahmi—he is horrible as the jaws of Moloch.
The Unnamed Six-fingered One—tallest of them all—

Lo, they will devour us! None can stand before them!
They will sweep us forth, as ants scattered by a broom.
Woe has come to Israel! Four great giants are marching.

Can Jehovah save from these? David, shall we flee?

3

Youth Passes

“With a sling and pebble in my hand I met Goliath—
And Jehovah drove the stone clear into his skull.
Shall we flee from fly-blown, swollen sons of the
Philistines?

Stone and arrow, spear and sword—death to the giants
of Gath!”

In the days forgotten,
Sons of the gods—of Baal,
Milcolm, Chemosh, Dagon,
Looking on men’s daughters,
Found them fair—and captured
Wives from them; their children
Were the giants—Arba,
Anak, Og, Goliath. . . .

THE MARCHING OF THE GIANTS

But Jehovah smote them:
Withered Arba and Anak;
Three were slain by Caleb,
David felled Goliath.
Emim and Zam-zummim,
Avvim,—all the giants
Hills of whitened bones!
. . . All, but four in Gath!

King David lifted up his sword, the sword of slain Goliath,
And struck on Ishbi-benob's shield—the strokes were brazen thunder.
His captains thronged around the towering knees of Saph and Lahmi,
And the huge Unnamed Six-fingered One—their strokes were brazen rain!

Mere grasshoppers their size—but black and thick they crowded on them,
As pelting wind-lashed waves that pound a boat until it breaks.
The armed men closed rejoicing on the Philistines, and the foemen
Met them as gayly,—the battle-blows pattered like brazen hail!

Each blow of Ishbi-benob was as if a wall struck David;
With slain Goliath's sword the king poured at him blow on blow.

JEHOVAH

One sliced a golden, sunbright lock from off the giant's
forehead,
Golden as David's hair, before slow age had frozen it
gray.

The giant roared in fury, lifted his sword, and swung
it round him,
A halo of glitter and menace, out of which the long
blade leapt.
King David stepped aside, and lifted to swing his
sword in answer.
And then . . . a twinge in his right arm—he stopped
the sword midway—

Then David suddenly knew he was old: worn arm that
balked at his bidding,
Hair gray. . . . Before him youth, lusty, enflamed.
. . . His vigor fled,
A great blow beat him down to his knees—the army
watched in horror
As Ishbi-benob raised his sword, to slay the anointed
king!

4

The Hills Brought Low

The iron sword of the giant poised, to gloat at its com-
ing triumph,—
The king, wilted and faint, held his dazed eyes on the
falling blade,—

THE MARCHING OF THE GIANTS

A low moan shook the Israelites, dumb at the desecration,—
Would David perish so? . . . The blow thundered—
metal on metal—

The blade of Ishbi-benob crashed upon the sword of Abishai,
Old as the king, yet a laughing man—and laughter banishes age.
Swift to the aid of the king he sprang,—and David crawled to safety,
While this new champion of Jehovah faced the giant's wrath.

Long Jehovah fought them—
Anakim from Hebron,
Emim out of Moab,
Avvim bred in Gath,
Zam-zummim clear from Ammon,
Giants gross and mighty,
Moving hills of evil
Striving with the lord!

Yet their bones are broken,
And their sons are slaughtered:
Arba, Og, and Anak,
Three that fell to Caleb,
Great Goliath conquered. . . .
Yea, and Ishbi-benob,
Lahmi, Saph, Unnamed One,
Jehovah, split their skulls!

JEHOVAH

Abishai laughed, and struck at his head, and bent the
shining helmet.

Abishai laughed, and drove at his heart, denting the
brazen shield.

Abishai laughed, and whirled to his right,—twisting
the giant's sword from him,

Then pierced him in the side—and watched him topple
to his knees,

Slowly and falteringly, as a tree cut by the ax of a
woodman,

Quivering doubtfully, then with a rush wheels its bulk
to the ground.

So fell Ishbi-benob, by the sword and the laugh of
Abishai,—

While panic broke like wind-lashed surf over the
foemen's hearts.

Lahmi stood frozen at Ishbi-benob's muttered cry, and
his falling;

David's armed men hacked his knees, then hewed his
fallen throat.

Saph grew pallid, and turned in flight—and the spears
of David's captains

Grew in his back like hedgehog quills—he writhed on
his face in death.

And the vast Unnamed One, alone where three had
stood beside him,

Fell, as an arrow halved his neck, a hill of shivering
death!

THE MARCHING OF THE GIANTS

All the Philistines fled like tumbling leaves before a
tempest,
While Israel kept to its slaughtering till the last foe
was dead.

Gifts for Lord Jehovah!
Eight huge thumbs to please him,
Eight great toes as tokens
Of the fallen giants!
Ishbi-benob, what is he?
Lahmi, Saph, Unnamed One,
Thumbs and great toes only
At Jehovah's feet!

5

Abishai laughed,—the Kenites marveled to hear
The laugh that had slain a giant. “I should have sung
That song, Benaiah! I'd have given you
At least two roarers to slay, not bound you down
To a puny one!” His laughter shook again,
Warming the heart.

“You need no breath-blown fame,
Savior of David! And I sang not for you,
But to show how Jehovah sheds no sinless blood,—
Only the evil giants, and wicked peoples,
Abominations, hateful in his sight!
He is no madman god, recklessly spitting
All men on one blade. We fight only his foemen,

JEHOVAH

To clear the lands of them, and mark his name
On the four pillars that hold up the sky.”

Jether the Kenite spoke to him again,
His moon face blank with uncertainty. “But how
Can Jehovah, god of Sinai, dwell in Zion?
All lands have gods . . . ours dwells in the mount he
chose.

It is one thing to travel,—another to move,
Tents, flocks, and household goods, to a far country.
He cannot dwell in a dozen cities at once,—
Much less in all the sheeptrails of the earth.
The covenant that Moses made with Jehovah
Bound you to worship him in his own way.
Why have you made of him a vagrant thing,
Borne from his home to lost and forgotten cities?”

VIII. SEVEN DAYS

1

Upon the northern road the silken dust,
So thick it clutched above men's marching ankles,
Lay undisturbed. But Joab's soul writhed restlessly,
Marking the vacancy hovering over the way
That led to the king. . . . Should he send a guarded
runner?

There might be marauding bands hid in the hills,
Clawing at lonely men. . . . Perhaps the king
Himself was uncertain; or gone from the Mount of
Zion

Upon a journey. . . . He could act himself,
Slaying or sparing,—maybe best, after all;
Abner's death had been so. Eyes sought the road;
No answer there.

One keen ear, turned toward Jether,
Marked his long query. Joab opened a palm
Toward the recorder. "Answer, Jehoshaphat:
Wisdom is in you."

The lean recorder rose,
His face a butcher's cleaver, yellowed and pocked,—
But not with age; dark valleys under the eyes,

JEHOVAH

From poring over parchments; skin hanging in
pouches;—

And ever a sensitive sneer, almost a smirk,
A ready defense should men mock at his wisdom,
Wavered across the cheeks,—humble to greatness,
Austere when humbler men addressed him. And now,
A leaf dried in young summer, he stood out
Before the Kenites, weighing them curiously.

“You query how Jehovah, who is indigenious
To Sinai-Horeb, can be at once the god
Of a dozen scattered municipalities.
The writings of the law hold answer for you:
A man, by law, is ruler of what he makes.
The smith fashions a plow, the carpenter
Constructs a chair—each belongs to its maker.
Just so the cities that roughen the even plain
All are Jehovah’s—for he made them all.”

2

Groping bewilderment clouded Jether’s face
And thickened his tongue. But Uz broke into question,
Suddenly, sharply. “What is this that you say?
Jehovah made the cities? Made the earth?”
He stopped, uncertainly.

Jehosaphat

Dampened his thin lips, with a thin dry pleasure
In ignorance that daised him as teacher.
His head bobbed solemnly up and down; his lips

SEVEN DAYS

Puckered in satisfaction. Then he answered:
"So speaks the law. Jehovah, we are taught,
In the beginning created the heaven and the earth,
A dark and watery waste; on this he moved
Stumblingly. 'Let there be light!' he cried,
And split it from the dark—so Day and Night.
This was the first day.

"Jehovah parted the solid mass of waters
With a firmament—the heavens; gathering the flood
Above, stored up for rain, and below, the sea.
This was the second day.

"Then his hand dried the waters into one place,
Till the firm land appeared; and he made grass,
And herb, and tree, robing the lands with green.
This was the third day.

"He hung up lights across the darkened heaven,
Bright dust of stars, a silver moon—all forged
At his anvil; where he heated, for the day,
A golden sun, to warm and brighten the lands—
This was the fourth day.

"Jehovah caused the waters and sky to give birth
To moving creatures: fish and deep-sea monsters,
And all the winged fowl that live in air.
This was the fifth day.

"Then at his word the earth travailed, and bore
Cattle and beast and creeping thing—last, man,

JEHOVAH

Male and female, made in Jehovah's image,—
To have dominion over fish and fowl,
Over beast, and cattle, and creeping thing—forever!
This was the sixth day.

“Heaven and earth were done, and the host of the
stars—
So on the seventh day Jehovah rested,
Blessing the day as his own day forever.
This was the seventh day.

“So speaks the law.”

3

Uz straightened his crumpled face, his claw-hand
pointing
Javelin-like at Jehoshaphat, his eyes
Scorching blackly toward the recorder, while anger
Shivered in each taut syllable he spoke:
“Surely a devil dwells within this law!
Can men credit such madness? You say Jehovah,
Our god, your god by covenant with Moses,
A hunter of our tribe, grandfather's father
To Jethro—storming ruler of Sinai—you say
That this Jehovah made the earth and the heaven,
The water, the land, the lizard, the starry candles,
Sheep, wolf, and man,—and all the rest you named?
He made them? He was born in the rich valley
Opening toward Midian,—wandered those lands we
wander,

SEVEN DAYS

Before he chose his hill, and conquered its god.
You say he made the hill he had to conquer?
You say, made all the earth—made even the valley
In which he was born? The valley, the camp, the tent
Where his mother shook with anguish, and brought him
 forth,
Held in the midwife's hand—a tiny suckling,
Smaller and weaker than a calf? He made the world?"

Uz locked his arms together, and waited an answer.

4

Jehoshaphat was ready with his response.
"Yes. . . . Jehovah, who led us out of Egypt,
Promised us Canaan and other blossoming lands,
And goes before our ever-conquering army,—
He made the earth, the heaven—and you, and me."

Uz came at him again. "Suppose that I
Came to you here in this camp, and told you: 'Know
That I, who stand before you, made that camel
Munching his straw, and made the straw he munches—
Made, too, the ground he stands on, and all ground,
The earth, the turquoise sky, those driven clouds,
I made them all! I made your army, too,
Each man of it, and your walled city Jerusalem,
All cities and all seas—in six short days
I made them!' If I said these words to you,
Would you not seek a wise man, to drive out

JEHOVAH

The demon within me?" His voice grew heavy with meaning.

"And if Jehovah, born within our tents,
Known there as youth and warrior, no matter how swollen

With pride at his great ventures, had come up
To any within the tribe, or out of it,
And puffed out such a tale, they must have called him
Either a liar, or a demon-ridden man.

He told no lies—he was too strong to need them.

He did not spill a vapor of boastful words,
Covetous of marvels he had not done. Why then
This law that says Jehovah made the earth
And heaven,—who walked them, in men's memory?"

The sneer, so near a smirk, upon the cheeks
Of the recorder, grooved a trifle deeper.

"Who made the earth, O ancient man of wisdom?
And who lifted the heaven?"

The look of Uz

Traveled a great way off, and waited there.
"They are here; is not that enough for man?
Some say they grew like herbs. . . . My years are
many,

My youth has known far older men than I,
But none who knew this thing. I do not know.
Nor shall man learn, however much he ponder,
However much he dream. But I do know
That Sinai's god and Jethro's warrior-father,
Jehovah, had no finger in the making!"

5

Up the long level of the northern road,
 Floored with its silken dust, Joab's tense eyes
 Had strained themselves, seeking from barren soil
 A harvest of movement. While Jehoshaphat
 Sang of the forging of sun and moon, the eyes
 Blinked wide in unbelief, at a sudden blur
 Where the road met the horizon—a dusty trifle
 That grew with the bitter talk, until he saw
 It was a group of men, not his single runner,
 Stirring the drowsy dust. There was the sparkle
 Of armor, and live colors. His heart dragged low;
 This was not the Cushite. . . . There were other ways
 Than waiting a lost key, when a door was locked. . . .

But Joab took no chances. He sent Abishai
 To learn who were moving southward. Then he turned
 His mind again to the talk; but ever it stole
 Back to the peopled road.

At last his brother
 Tiptoed beside, with the unbelievable word:
 "You had better come. Your Cushite runner returns,
 Bringing Zadok, David's priest,—while the other,
 The priest Abiathar, remains with the king."

Joab showered his greetings upon Zadok,—
 Joy at the filled need driving off his glumness,—
 And on his men, who brought the golden ephod,

JEHOVAH

Forged of the rings and earrings of slaughtered foemen,
Its weight two thousand and forty shekels of gold—
And the sacred Urim and Thummim, two secret
stones

By which the god could speak. He turned to the
Cushite:

“Your story.”

“Soon as I entered Judah, I learned
The anointed king had traveled south to Hebron.
I found him there. He sent a word for your ear,
Concerning what you asked; but most he sent
His priest, Zadok, with the ephod wrought of gold,
That the word of the Lord Jehovah might be had
On all perplexing questions.” Then he came closer,
And whispered briskly to his chief; and all
Went out to the noisy council.

The talking calmed
As the great lord of the hosts came forth, beside him
The plump, benignant priest, his ample fingers
Wreathed peacefully on the embroidered girdle
That based the sacred breastplate. His face stayed
stone,
Altho he missed no spurt of the murmur that buzzed
In the Kenite ranks; his round face held the meekness
Of sleek and well-fed things.

The warrior spoke:
“Let us lay by this banquet of erudition
That our recorder and your old envoy furnish.

SEVEN DAYS

Theirs is a weighty dispute, to be carried on
By the altar at Jerusalem—some slow season.
But I have matters of moment, that shove aside
Such ancient queries.” He turned his words at Uz:
“Your tribe, from the plains that edge the southern
 mountains,
Sent you to learn of David’s will,—alarmed
By news of what his and Jehovah’s army
Did to your border peoples. I gave you answer,
Demanding you serve Jehovah, and bow beneath
The ox-yoke of the king. You answered me,
Claiming you worshiped our god, tho not our king.
I have sought David’s word on this, and have it:
Listen to the saying of the Lord’s anointed!”

IX. THE KING'S WORD

1

The two score Kenite envoys, heads of families,
Drew closer to Uz, their leader—an age-burnt coal,
Yet storing an inexhaustible flame within
His heart. If there was word of doom, together
Men could receive it better; if word for joy,
Why cuddle it to a lonely bosom?

First Joab

Conferred aside with Jehoshaphat, and then
Continued. "David, son of Jesse, the king
Of Judah and Israel, the conqueror
Of countless lands, and the anointed of God,
Sends word to the envoys out of that small tribe,
The Kenites, who graze their flocks and herds beneath
Mount Sinai, and in the hollows south of the desert."
A sneer crept out of its hiding, onto his face.
"King David finds it strange that you should set
Yourselves in the way of his armies, to waste their
time
In lengthy parley, when you are a tribe
Neither large in number, nor blessed with wealth of
flocks
Nor cattle, much less gold and precious goods

THE KING'S WORD

Which other nations boast. Since you are so slight
In men of war and possessions, he bids you hush
Your speech to that fitting so slight a people."

The Kenites, who had looked at least for courtesy,
Flushed hot at the measured slur. Restless hands
Fidgeted with daggers nested beneath their cloaks,
Hearts heated, waves of alternate warmth
And chill pricked them. Their raw looks were cast
At Joab. But no flush lit Uz's cheek.
Instead, he stood off quietly, studying Joab,
Neither shame nor anger in him, only a wonder
At what skulked behind the insult.

Jether

Stepped suddenly out to speak. The old man woke,
Caught hold of his arm, commanded in whispers, and
then

Pleaded desperately, but wordlessly,
To alter his course. The face of Jether was hard
As hill rock; he could not even hear Uz speak,
So great was his angry shame. Sharply he said:
"The eyes of the king are clear, but cannot travel
Desert and valley, nor climb sky-nudging hills.
The Kenites are a mighty tribe; our men
Of war are numbered ten thousand and four hundred.
There is no key when they lock our mountain passes.
Our flocks are like the drops of the rain for number,
Our cattle crowd the valleys: there are no such flocks
And herds as ours for number. Such are the Kenites."
Jether swaggered back.

JEHOVAH

Old Uz looked thru him,
And quietly said, "Small things can hide in small
holes."

2

The smile on Joab's face was less a smile
Than a hidden mock of the smile of an honest man.
"You have those facts, recorder? You have the num-
bers
Of men and flocks and herds? . . . Heed, you Kenites,
The words of David." His face grew straight again,
Flint-like and fearful. "It is not enough that man
Worship Jehovah his own way; if all men
Did this, there could be no tabernacle,
There could be no temple, such as the king will build. . .
Jehovah dwells in Zion: the anointed king
Saw him there, in a vision. He dwells on Sinai;
He has pitched his tents high above Ascelon,
He has built him a mansion over Ammon and Moab,
And over all lands conquered in his name.
He has given his word that all the lands of earth
Shall kneel before his throne, all mountains bow down,
All seas humble themselves to do him honor.
No city of the plain may flout his name,
No farthest sheeptrail fail to do him reverence.
He made all lands, and gives them to his children,
The twelve of Israel, to exalt his name.
So shall the conquered earth accept his yoke,
That he may exult in his terrible beauty and power!
Jehovah, the god of battles, the lord of the hosts

THE KING'S WORD

Of the stars—Know he is God, and David king!”
And now persuasion curved his voice. “You are
A mighty tribe, you tell us, mighty and wealthy. . . .
If you accept Jehovah as your god,
And David as your king, you will find his yoke
Is light as foam circling a whirlpool. You are
To pay as tribute to David, out of this wealth,
Yearly, ten talents of gold, a thousand sheep
And half a thousand heifers, all without blemish.
Accept these terms,—and they are mild, I tell you,
O Kenites, as a friend to you and all men:
Mild, when compared to what King David offered
To your border tribes; nothing, when matched with
what
They took, as I have sung,—accept these terms,
And you return in peace to your own sheepfolds,
And dwell forever under Jehovah’s arm—”

“Where we have always dwelt,” Uz broke in softly.

“I have spoken.”

“If we refuse these gentle terms,
This trifling yearly gift to the king,—or the god,
In whose behalf the king is so zealous?”

The warrior
Took out his sword from the scabbard, and held it high,
Sliding a loving finger down the bright edge.
“Clean,” he said. “So are the lands of the enemies
Of Jehovah, when his armies pass out of them.

JEHOVAH

I need not say all we must do; yet some
You should be told. The word of Jehovah is,
The tribe that will not obey is to be hunted
And harried to the rim of the earth. All males
Who can bear the sword, shall bear it in their bellies:
None will be spared. The old men too shall perish,
The youth be sold in other lands, as eunuchs }
To serve forever; and no more seed of the loins
Of the Kenites shall dwell on earth. And of your
 women,
Those who have known men shall now know the sword;
Those who are virgins, be shared as slaves among us.
So shall Jehovah blot out the name of those
Who do not heed his statutes. This is his word."

3

The Kenites stood with unchanged faces, while
The bloody words marched forth. Then quietly Uz
Walked out again, taking the sword of Jehovah
Out of its litter, that ancient giant's weapon
Eight full spans long. This time he did not stoop,
Stepping somehow erect. He took a place
Near Joab, his words coming with terrible softness:
"By this sword, which once Jehovah wielded,
By his name, who was a tribesman with us,
By his mount, where still he dwells in tempest,
By himself, our god from his beginning,
I put a question to you." He stopped, then spoke:
"We serve Jehovah, and no threats could drive us
To serve another god. . . . We have no king;

THE KING'S WORD

It is not Jehovah's will. We will serve no king,
For he has forbidden it. Your own law tells
How Moses made this covenant with our Jehovah,
Who, then and now, was, and is—our god.
You say in Jehovah's name you will march against us.
Answer this question, as Jehovah bids you:
Can Jehovah march against Jehovah?
Can Jehovah fight Jehovah? Can he slay himself?
On this—as servants of our god—we stand.”

4

All stared at Joab's face, to see what change
These words would make; but nothing crept without.
He seemed to ponder. Then at last words woke:
“This question is for Jehovah's self to solve.
King David has sent Zadok, his priest, to us,
Bearing the king's own ephod of wrought gold,
Forged of the rings and earrings of slaughtered foemen,
Its weight two thousand and forty shekels of gold.
To-morrow he shall consult the god upon this.
Night slips again among us; the fires glow out
In the tent-field spread below, faster than they
Are lighted in the starry camp of heaven.
Now let us sleep, and lay all cloudy questions
Before the god.”

He called Abishai to him,
And shared a few sharp secret words. At once
He raised his voice. “King David is at Hebron;
March back to-night, leading the half of the army.

JEHOVAH

Take all your chiefs, but leave Benaiah with me.”
Quietly he passed into his tent.

5

Abishai

Stood on the northward slope, above the road,
Watching the clanking files of dusky figures
Flowing out of the orange haze of the campfires
Into more dusk. One by one the thousands
Tallied and passed—all northward. Yet his heart
Joyed not at the healthy tread of the full ranks.
Why had not God made his heart such as Joab's,
If he must do Joab's planning? . . . Northward four
miles,
Then swiftly round to the southern valley, where
The camp of the Kenites lay, trusting the truce
Their envoys had made with Joab. . . . This was war,
And David and Jehovah did not lose. He wrapped
His thick cloak tighter, banishing night's chilliness,
And joined his captains, marching, marching northward.

Over the darkening ashes of the tent-fires
A round moon mounted, like a silver target
Pushed up the gray wall of the sky. Around it
A pallid halo dragged, vast as a sea—
And farther, farther yet, an echoing ring
Of light glimmered fitfully. The sentries,
Yawning, pounded the sandy uncertainty
Of the roads between the tents, wondering drowsily
What menace of heavy woe hung in that moon.

THE KING'S WORD

And the white light crept into the tents, so that men
Tossed uneasily in their sleep; and visions
And troubled dreams peopled the silent ways.
Old Uz dreamed of a valley peaceful and green;
But the color of the dream of Joab was red as blood.

X. THE DREAM OF ZADOK

1

Thru the brisk gloom of the dawn-hour Joab sought
The tent of the priest. After the greeting, he sent
The attendants off, and spoke alone with Zadok.
“You have heard something of what these desert dogs
Bay at us; and you have talked with David. What
Will Jehovah say to this plea, of a god
Warring against himself? And how should I question?”

Zadok's face was smooth, tho he carried no love
For the man or maid who stayed him from his breakfast.
Then, too, Joab was sliding soil—death
To those on whom it fell, and uncertain footing
For careless walking. He was too close to Abiathar,
The other priest; tho this did not vex Zadok,
Knowing that the king's heart was his, except
As warning against the warrior. And yet Joab
Was chief of the hosts, and Zadok had been sent,
At David's will, to priest him; it would not do
To nurse a private grudge in such crossed times.

The plump voice of Jehovah adjusted himself
Upright upon a couch. “No easy matter,
Seeing the king so fond of Jehovah worship,—
Except in wives, who may bow to a pot of cheese,

THE DREAM OF ZADOK

For all he cares, as long as they warm his blood.
A score more wives since you left! And two—why,
 beauty's
A cheap word, when you see them. Three more son-
 births;
I come in there, you know; it keeps me busy,"
While a deep sigh lifted his ample stomach.
"It keeps me busy! . . . Where were we? Oh, this
 business,
These Kenites. What an impudent ancient piece
Their leader is! Always snapping and fretting,
Worrying over something. Such men must be
Very unhappy." He sighed in commiseration.
"Well, you wanted to know—I talked this over
With the king himself; your friend Abiathar
Was there, pleased as a girl with a jewel, over
A girl, indeed! A chit of a handmaid the King
Of Tyre had sent him. Things somehow pass me by;
Perhaps they think that I'm too old, or too godly,
As Moses thru the desert. I use a sword,
But not, as he, to halve my bed. I've always
Pitied poor Zipporah, his wife; altho
She managed somehow to get along; you know,
The women always do." And Zadok chuckled,
A comfortable sound. Joab laughed too,
Knowing of old the flowing measure of gossip
The priest poured out for all.

"About these Kenites.
You might have guessed his answer. And the god
Will speak a word such as he always speaks,

JEHOVAH

Spreading his glory. But let me tell you, Joab,"
And the fat face threw off its mask of lightness,
Grew stern and sardonic, showing the brutal power
And craft that had raised its owner side by side
With the son of the former priest, and kept him there,
The secure favorite, guiding the ways of David,—
"Let me tell you a vision that I had last night,
Disturbed by this bleak dry desert air, and that moon
That was my bed-mate. I think you will find in this
An answer better than any words of mine,
Both as to David's will,—and Lord Jehovah's."

2

The Death of a God

I lay upon my couch, and the walls
Of the tent opened, and the dome of the sky
Was one tall tent covering me.

Then the walls of the sky opened,
And all I saw was emptiness,
Till up the horizon a great head
Lifted, filling the third of the sky.

One eye was the sun, and one the moon.
When the god rose, he filled the heaven.
Before him the choiring morning-stars

Stepped, and the evening stars danced
Gladly behind him. The hosts of the sky,

THE DREAM OF ZADOK

Cherubs, and seraphs, were his train,
Hundred thousands of hundred thousands.

His cloak was woven of all storm clouds,
In his scabbard nested the lightning;
Over his shoulder a club of thunder,—

And then his mouth was opened, and out
Came all sweet sounds together blended.
“They are all slain,” in shining tones,
“The gods are all slain—save me, Jehovah!”

One squat hill reared above the plain:
To it a figure climbed, and shouted:
“I am Jehovah, and a god!”

Out of the mouth of the sky, the voice
Shook into thunder, till all life trembled.
“Baal is slain by the Tyrian sea,
Dagon floats there, belly upward.

“Chemosh has died across his altar,
Milcolm is a skull and splintered bones.
The gods are all slain—and by Jehovah!

“I am Jehovah, the ancient of years,
Sky-king, earth-king. And what are you,
Voice breaking the quiet of my hills
When all the voices of earth are sleeping?”

JEHOVAH

“I am Jehovah, god of Mount Sinai,
Son of the hill-clan of the Kenites,
Now, after death, their god forever.”

“You should have died, as a man’s childhood!
Who do you lift your voice to taunt me
With the small seed from which grows power,
With the low soil whence godhood springs?”

“I am indeed your childhood—eternally.
I shall live on, that men may keep
Knowledge of that from which you grew!”

“Man cannot grow to his height, till his childhood
Stretches dead on its shattered altars.
And I must kill you, I who love you,
That I, your child, may be god in truth.”

“I am Jehovah—a young god.
You shall not kill me, for fear the people
Learn of the seed from which you blossomed!”

The figure turned to flee his hill,
When out of the heaven the sky-god reached
An arm like an endless range of mountains,
With fingers like headlands that pierce the sea.

The fingers closed on the mountain figure:
One choked gasp racked the night—then silence,
And the hand sought again the heaven,

THE DREAM OF ZADOK

With one more god slain on his altar,
White and still on his lonely mountain.
Thus Jehovah slew Jehovah:
While out of the mouth of the sky, the voice

Whispered, like all sweet murmurs blended,
"The gods are all slain," in eternal tones,
"There is no god—save me, Jehovah!"

3

Zadok's tense form grew slack, as he ended the song;
A sigh emptied his lungs. But Joab rose
Joyfully, and strode to the tent flap, his hand
Ready to fling it open. "There is the answer!
This dream must be told to all—then to dismiss
The Kenites, and march south—to its fulfillment!"

But Zadok shook his head. "There are some truths
That are not for the crowd. What is my word,
Or even a vision Jehovah sends, to what
We have to speak his will—the gold-wrought ephod?
This further, Joab: there is a pestilent brood
Of trouble-makers among the tribes, who take
Each chance to rail and snarl, in Jehovah's name,
Against the king and the nation."

"The self-called prophets
Who stir up the people?"

"You know them. One of the ranters,—
Jotham, a man out of Succoth, in Gilead,

JEHOVAH

A noisy nuisance—came on us at Hebron, and dared
Chatter his speech against us there. The people—
The army was away—they almost mobbed me,
Driven mad by his froth.”

“You, David’s priest!
If I had been there, with half a dozen companions—”

“You know the hillmen of Judah—braying wild asses.
I quieted them somehow; the king’s guard was my
answer,
With a split head or two to point the moral.
But this same plague of a mouther followed our train
Here to the camp; we could not drive him off,
Nor dam his muddy overflow of drivel.
He’s somewhere near; let’s not give him this dream
To babble over. Let Jehovah speak:
He’ll hardly dare to dirty the word of the god.”

4

Facing the ranks of the Kenites, where Uz and the rest
Waited in doubt and wonder, the gold-wrought ephod
Tangled the rays of the sun, held some, flung others
Brilliantly broadcast. Into the central space,
While the long files of soldiers of Israel waited
In silence, and Joab and all the chiefs stood hushed,
The shining figure of Zadok waddled into view,
His marble face quieting all levity. The breastplate
Sparkled in twelve-fold beauty; the tinkling bells,
Hung on the robe’s hem, gave the only sound

THE DREAM OF ZADOK

In all the host. Out of their place he drew
The sacred stones, the Urim and the Thummim,
And took his accustomed stand before the image
To cast the lots, that Jehovah's voice might be loosed.
He poised expectantly; Joab came before him,
Framing the opening question.

He did not ask it.

A shiver of tumult shook the nearer ranks;
They eddied dizzily, and out of their heart
A figure catapulted—a gaunt tall man,
With thorn-gashed goat-hair mantle; and with beard,
Hair, eyes, and manner, wild as a she-bear.

“Stay quiet!”

“Hold him!”

“Don't let the fool—”

“Be dumb,

Let your profane tongues, that dare to jabber
When Jehovah's prophet appears, drop out of your
heads!”

He flung two last ones off, and came to Joab,
Proudly, scornfully facing him. “A doom!
A doom to those that scorn Jehovah's commands!
The word of Jehovah has come to me, to Jotham,
Bidding me cry his will to the four winds,
To pierce like a knife the ears of all his children.
Why do you hire an army of strong men, and lead them
Over the peaceful earth, killing and slaying?
Why do you march against the Lord's own servants,
The Kenites, with vain hearts puffed up to slaughter?”

JEHOVAH

From under his cloak he drew two pots—one small,
One a huge vessel. He held them in the air.
“Two pots: each can catch and hold the rain.
Look—I dash them together. The small one shatters,
There is but one left. Yes, and watch it now!”
With terrible strength he flung it against a stone,—
It broke with a noise like weapons meeting. “Both
gone.

Two peoples: each can catch and hold the word
Of Lord Jehovah. Dash them together, one breaks—
The smaller. But the wrath of the Lord will burst
The larger vessel, even you, O Israel!
There is yet time! To your homes in peace—stretch
not
His patience, like a bow bent past its limit:
For it will break—and woe to the peoples then!”

The prophet stopped for breath. Zadok had shrunk
Against the ephod, ill at ease, yet determined
To hold his place; he had the army here
To comfort his heart. Joab ignored the man,
Coming again forward.

Jotham swung round,
Speaking again. “Woe to the fighters, whose chief
Is a man of blood, stabbing the princes of the land!
Woe to a land, whose priests grow gross as swine,
Vast pot-bellied hungers, devouring its substance!
Woe to a land, whose king seeks for strange women,
Sprung of strange gods, scorners of Lord Jehovah!
Will you return, O Israel? Back from this whoring

THE DREAM OF ZADOK

After ways which the Lord has forbidden—and back
To his ancient justice and faithful brotherhood!”

He paused—and in the rear some soldier’s voice
Lifted derisively the end of a song:

“Spear is brother to belly,
Sword is brother to skull!”

Jotham cried on: “Woe to the land, which has strayed
Too far from Jehovah’s laws! In their priest’s mouth
He puts a lying spirit, to lead you to doom.
Return, O Israel! Or this great doom—”

Joab broke thru: “Fellow, your words are wild,
And yet Jehovah may have some part in you;
So you shall not be harmed. Be silent, now,
While great Jehovah’s chosen priest consults
The god himself. Be silent in his great moment,
Or we shall make you silent!”

He turned to Zadok
Scorning to waste another look on the prophet.
“Ask of Jehovah, if the Kenite shepherds
Worship his name.”

The priest prepared the stones:
All watched him in still awe. Only Joab called
“Jehovah, give a perfect lot!”

Then Zadok
Looked up, startled. “Jehovah says—they do!”

XI. A PROPHET IN ISRAEL

1

The shrill and sapless voice of Uz sliced thru
The silence. "Great is Jehovah, and great his word!
Now is lord Joab satisfied?"

Once again
The words of Joab questioned the dumb god,
Who found a tongue in the stones and the gold-wrought
ephod:
"Ask of Jehovah, if the Kenites serve him
As he would be served."

The murmur rumbled softly
Thru both the armies: "Give a perfect lot!"

The stones stilled to their rest. The priest spoke
clearly:
"The word of the god: not as he would be served."

A chill certainty of what cold horror
The imminent speech of the god bore in its womb,
Ripe to let fall, tightened the speech of Uz.
He had faced lying foreign gods; he could face

A PROPHET IN ISRAEL

This twisted tongue of a false-hearted throat of Jehovah.
"Speak on," the words came stronger, "we would hear
all.

But there is a truth-wrought ephod beneath Mount
Sinai!"

"And truth is a tree, head downward, seen in a pool,"
Scoffed Joab. "Truth is a man seen thru a mist;
Truth is a stump that night has changed to a beast,—
So the fool says in his heart. You would hear truth?
Jehoshaphat, step forth and tell us truly
Who are these Kenites who do not serve Jehovah
As he would be served."

The sparse recorder raised
His young, dried parchment face. "Who are these
Kenites?"

They are the sons of Cain, first-born of Adam,
A brother-slayer; from him they get their name,
From him, a fugitive and a vagabond
Skulking from land to land, with the mark of the
finger

Of God burnt on his forehead. So it is written
In the book of Jasher."

2

"So, Cain-ites," Joab taunted,
"You are the sons of him that flees in the night
Forever from the face of man and God.
How could such serve God rightly?"

JEHOVAH

Uz stilled the wrath,
Swollen and red, on the Kenite faces, and answered:
“If this is true, Jehovah does not live!
If this is true, may Jehovah cleave my skull!”
He stood tense, head bared, waiting.

Again a voice
Lifted the chorus:
“—brother to skull, to skull!
Spear is brother to belly,
Sword is brother to skull!”

“He may take his own time about it,” Joab warned him.
“You are still alive; would you push the plans of the
 gods?
As for this other, the book of Jasher has spoken.
One question more of Jehovah. If these Cain-ites
Refuse King’s David’s word, and will not bow
Beneath his ox-yoke, and serve the lord Jehovah,
Shall Israel go up to battle against them,
Treating them as the word of the god has commanded
His enemies shall be treated?”

Before the answer
Came from the priest, as if the sky-god’s hand
Wrote his own judgment on the page of heaven,
The ground darkened, as the edge of a frowning cloud
Moved from the north across the cheek of the sun,
Dimming his smile. The heart of the cloud was black,
Black as a rain-soaked tree-trunk seen at dusk;

A PROPHET IN ISRAEL

Below its van a bleak wind shivered and whined,
Driving the gray dust and the brown leaves southward.

“An omen!” Joab cried. “The cloud sweeps south!
Jehovah, again your perfect lot!”

The priest
Ended; and in the sickly light of the sun
His face glowed leprous, like an ailing moon.
“The word of Jehovah: Israel shall go forth!”

“Lord Joab—” Uz dampened parched lips.

“The word
Is spoken! You yield to David the king?”

“We cannot;
Jehovah forbids us. He will protect—”

“No more!”
Joab thundered as a god might. “To your holes,
Accursed brood of Cain! In the name of Jehovah
We march on the hill-fiend you have dared to call
By the holy name; and on your blasphemous tribe,
Chaff before David’s fan, grass to his sickle!
All we have done to Moab and Ammon and Amelek
Is nothing. We shall come on you like a plague
Of locusts; over a land rich for the harvest
We pass—and it is a desert, desolate, lifeless.
Your tented villages and your grazing ways
Shall be full at morning of men and boys; by night

JEHOVAH

The soil shall be a sponge dipped in blood,
Heavy with stilled hills of flesh and bone;
The fowls of the air and the scavenger beasts shall glut
Upon your sons, O Kenites, to the last one!
No male shall be spared; the women swollen with child
The sword of Jehovah shall rip open, to be sure
No male escape! So shall your seed be ended.
Your daughters who have wed men shall mate with the
spear;
The virginal shall dwell in far lands, slaves,
Even to the last one. Your flocks and herds
Alone shall prosper, the spoil of Jehovah and David.
Cast away armor and weapons, while there is time,
And flee to the forgotten rims of the world—
For the wrath of God is marching upon the south,
Over the desert, up the mountainous ways.
Above our scourging ranks, his hosts of the sky,
Cherub and seraph, morning and evening star,
Gather against you. The trees shall shake with their
tread,
The pines and cedars rustle as his hosts pass
Lightfooted above them—and nothing can stand before
The might of their charge. Death drifts down from
their wings,
Vengeance and death. . . . The sword of the Lord is
clean—
So will your land be, when his doom is done;
But the sword, the great blood-letter, will be red!
Go! His lightning crouches in its scabbard
Of cloud above you. Go, or his blade speaks now!”

A PROPHET IN ISRAEL

3

So violently he spoke, the veins swelled out
Like small ropes on his forehead. The Kenites turned,
Following Uz, when a man came running heavily
Into their midst.

“Shaaph!” cried Uz. “We missed you—
Where have you been?”

Out of his shaken bosom
The hot words tumbled. “Treachery, horrible treach-
ery!

A voice came in my sleep, bidding me seek
The southern road and the valley beyond, that leads
To our camp, and the mountains. In the night I sought
them;

Nothing stirred. . . . Then out of the furtive north,
As the gray dawn changed to day, the sparkle of spears,
The glitter of armor,—and southward marching,
marching,

The thousands of David! O God! I was one man—
What could I do? I sent the lad who was with me
On wind-swift feet to our camp, and ran to you here.
It is treachery, brothers! What of the truce they
swore to?
Brothers—”

The distant humming of soldiers' voices
Swelled on the chorus:

“Spear is brother to belly,
Sword is brother to skull!”

JEHOVAH

But Shaaph cried on: "Treachery, horrible treachery!
Speak, Uz, and stop it! By now those marching
 thousands
May have reached the valleys where trustingly our
 army
Waits for our word,—may have fallen on them with the
 sword,
Or circled our homes, burnt them, gutted the land
Of wealth and our children and women—"

Uz heard no more,
But cried to Joab: "You sent Abishai, then,
To ravage our lands—before your gold god spoke?"

Joab's eyes rolled in triumph to heaven:
"The arm of Jehovah is long, spanning the earth;
The sword of Jehovah is keen, spitting the mountains;
The army of Jehovah sleeps not, but speeds to the
 slaughter!"

"Jehovah has betrayed us!" Jether burst out.

"Jehovah can not betray," Uz chanted wildly;
"His breast will be a shield before his children,
His sword will ring them with safety! No power can
 shake
The man whose faith in Jehovah is firm. Lift, hearts,
Joyfully to Jehovah! His faith is a shield
Eternal, invincible! Come, let us flee
Southward, to rouse his hosts against these wasters
Who scorn his word from living lips of truth,

A PROPHET IN ISRAEL

Even their prophet Jotham; but seek instead
Abominations, hateful to his eyes;
Who blaspheme of his name; who break sworn coven-
ants—”

He choked. There was no answer. Then he turned,
The Kenites following. Soon down the road
Only a cloud of dust scattered and thinned,
As fear of what they must find pushed their feet.

4

“Now sound the trumpets!” Joab commanded shrilly,
The lust of the man-hunt hot, as the prey scuttled off.
“Let half the thousands aim straight for the camp. . . .
The rest, Benaiah, you will lead to David;
It is his will. We hunt these dogs to the death—
Abishai has them encircled. On, for Jehovah!
Let no man harm the venerable skull of Uz
On peril of death; I claim that for my sword!
Now, trumpeters, blow!”

The great blasts shook the air,
The wind shrieked from the southward-driving cloud,
The thousands tallied, and took up the march in the dim
Pallor of the throttled sunlight. Benaiah waited,
Tallying those remaining—when out of the turmoil
A high voice reached him, crying in woeful tones
A woeful message. He saw him, the mad prophet,
The man called Jotham, and neared him, to hear him
better.

The warnings were flung against the tight-locked ears
Of the thousands marching south.

JEHOVAH

“A doom, O Israel!

Woe to them that have left the ways of Jehovah!

‘Am I not a god who lives in a tent?

What have I to do with the ways of Canaan?

“Israel has moved into cities, and Judah

Dwells in walled towns. They take the land in pledge.

Despoil the widowed and the fatherless,

Sell justice to the rich, trample the poor,

Pervert the sayings of them of ancient times;

What have I to do with the ways of Canaan?

“They have spit at my prophets, and sold their
children for slaves;

They have bowed down to Baal and Asherah, serving
them

With drunken embraces. . . . I am the Lord thy God!

They have set up a king to rule them, as do the heathen:

What have I to do with the ways of Canaan?

“Their kings have toyed with my law, and wed strange
women,

Have taken the fields, the olive-yards and the vine-
yards,

Bent the tribes with taxes, enslaved their children,

Raised up bloody strong men to curse the people—

What have I to do with the ways of Canaan?

“Return, O Israel! Return to Jehovah

While yet there is time!”

Benaiah listened attentively,

“What are his ways?” half scornful, half eager, he
asked.

XII. THE GOD GROWS

1

Benaiah answered his wonder. "I serve King David,
The chief of these bloody strong men that vex your
vision,
Keeping in order the unruly in Israel,
And scouring danger out of his borders. I serve
Jehovah as well as the king—and I wonder what
You mean with your clashing words." He eyed the
the prophet,
Uncertainly. "You seem so wrapped in your mission,
As if your life, or your next meal, depended
Upon it."

Jotham found his tongue. "Let priests,
Like Abiathar and Zadok, prophesy for bread,
Weigh out the words of God for food and shelter.
Jehovah's spokesmen speak his messages, knowing
That he whose compassion sent the rain of manna
Will feed their needs. You say you serve Jehovah—
Do you know who he is?"

"More than you do,
And more than many say, or, indeed, see.
He is the god of Israel, by the covenant

JEHOVAH

That Moses made; before then, for all I know,
The mountain deity that the Kenites grew,
God out of fighting man. He was weak then,
Mere lord of a mountain and one tribe; then, two.
Now one of his tribes has spread like gossip over
The lands of earth; and with it Jehovah has grown
Lord of a swelling kingdom, conqueror of gods,
Who squirm as slaves at his feet. If we conquer all
lands,
His realm above us would widen, as king of the gods;
If the red-fingered Assyrian wake again,
Or Egypt rouse, or any conqueror lessen us,
So will Jehovah shrink."

"Blind heart, blind eye!
Who would make a city Baal out of Jehovah,
Couch him with Asherah, protectress of harvests,
Send him reeling bloodily among the nations,
Drunk with the wine of destruction! Blind eye, blind
heart!"

Jotham raised his voice, as Benaiah's captains
And groups of his soldiers neared to listen. "Sweet
In the nostrils of Jehovah is the lamb
Of the sacrifice—but not the fruits of the land.
He has no joy in farm and orchard and vineyard.
He takes no pleasure in cities; where is Gomorrah,
And where is Sodom, that foul and leprous spot
Whitening the land? So will all cities be
When his wrath walks. The Canaanite dwelt in cities,
When Moses and Joshua led the twelve tribes up;

THE GOD GROWS

Theirs were the fertile grazing fields to possess,
The rich rank pastures; but Jehovah forbade them
Walled towns and farms, and their abominations.
'Why have you strayed from my ways, O Israel?
Why have your rulers turned my justice to gall,
Bitter as wormwood? Are you not all brothers,
David the king, and the beggar that drones in the
 bystreets,
Zadok the priest, and the widowed and fatherless?
I am thy God, that led thee out of Egypt
To a pasture land flowing with milk and honey—
To dwell in peace, not drive the wanton sword
At innocent men,—not drive the blasphemous sword
At men that worship me, as did these Kenites!'"

2

His words drove like a charge of chariots,
Spreading dismay. Benaiah raised a hand
Used to authority. "Not so fast. These Kenites,
I well believe, worshiped Jehovah; but that
Is not enough. His own words, out of the ephod,
Damned them to death, if they refused—"

 "Blind heart!
Blind eye, that cannot see when the sun is highest!
Jehovah's word has come to his children, many
And many a time. When they crawled over the desert,
A tent folk, driving their flocks, it went before them,
Flame by night and cloud by day. The flame
Is gone from Judah, the cloud from Israel!

JEHOVAH]

“When Deborah smote the Syrian, my justice
Warmed the land like a cloak; the Canaanite
Dwelt in his evil cities, and plowed his fields
In Baal’s name: you slept in your hillside tents.
The justice is fled from Judah, is stolen from Israel!

“When Gideon slew my foes, and Jair and Jephthah
Judged out of Gilead, still my people followed
The words of my heart. When Saul ruled, all my words
And statutes walked the great roads and the small.
My word is dead in Judah, and forgotten in Israel.

“Now they have reared my altar in Jerusalem
Of the Canaanites. The sons of the town were spared,
The daughters stretch their limbs on purple beds
In the palaces of David and his princes.
They have moved my ancient landmarks to build them
mansions,
Have added field to field to make a garden,
Have taken usury, and pledges on land,
Have married wives of the children of strange gods,
Piled temples to them, with graven images—and there
They serve the abomination of the Canaanite,
Baal of Sidon, and Asherah of Tyre.
These are their sins, in number like the sand grains.

“Yet now they enter thru my gate of reckoning!
I have put a lying spirit in the mouths of prophets,
Have twisted the tongues of priests, that they weave
deceit,

THE GOD GROWS

I have spoken no truth thru the ephod! The sin of
Israel
Is not yet full, nor the iniquity of Judah
Full to the brim. Yet a little longer,
More sinning in city and field, more wasting of blood,
As of the Kenites, and the doom is full—
And desolation's dreariest desolation
Shall cover hills and valleys and walled cities.
There yet is time,' says Jehovah; 'Israel, come!'"

3

Benaiah shook his head. "You boast Jehovah
Is thus and so; but what if you be wrong?
I have done my share of braining his enemies:
Two giant sons of Ariel of Moab; an Egyptian
Five cubits high, with his own spear; a lion
That sprang at me in a pit on a snowy day;
An even three hundred Philistines at one time,
All in Jehovah's name. Have you done as much?
Where is your tally of skulls? Does this not give me
A right to speak his mind? . . .

"I liked old Uz

And the Kenites. Joab, of late, is very tender
To guard my safety; no post of danger—and honor—
Falls to my lot; so, I am left behind
To march to the king. Yet if the hour were different,
No matter my liking, I might have gone to the south:
By now this spear would have pricked its toll, shone gay
In many coats of crimson stain, where men

JEHOVAH

Fall to our arms, and the tents are torched, and the
flocks
And women divided. You say this is not of Jehovah;
I say it is. How can man know? I seek
That truth that Joab chaffed at, when Uz spoke."

Jotham's wild eyes snapped like sparks. "His truth?
He has written it in the even fall of dew,
He has painted it in the glory of the sunset,
He has molded it into tree and beast and man!
It sleeps in the rock, crawls in the serpent, and walks
Erect in us! If Jehovah's careful fingers
Shaped every stone and snake and man, can you think
He wrought them to be broken and defaced
By wanton killing? What his love has made
He bids us guard. Is not this truth grown manifest
In each live thing over the living lands?

"Jehovah is a god of brotherhood!
If a brother be slain, is not the tribe brought low?
For his tribe's sake shall he spare him. How then
shall Israel
Follow a king who sends them forth to earn
Jehovah's finger-print on their brows—like Cain?"

4

"The Kenites are not our brothers! They are a tribe
Remote, alien," Benaiah tested him.

"No, all men are our brothers! Jehovah's tribe
Is the world of men! His own hand shaped the world,

THE GOD GROWS

Fripped it with leaf and blossom, loosed in the air
His winged fowls, and peopled sea and land—
All, all our brothers! At last he molded man
In his own image, all of his mighty tribe,
Crowding the highways and seaways of the earth,
Living in love and peace. This is his will.
Can you think otherwise? Do you think Baal,
Chemosh, and Dagon, made the tribes of men
That blunder after them? Jehovah made all!
All are the children of his hand and heart.

“Baal-Zebub of Gath, Moloch of Ammon,
The other defeated gods, were gods of bloodshed,
Fattening on goblets of blood and reeking corpses.
Jehovah is not so: his heart is torn
When a spear tears the heart of one of his children;
His soul is grieved at bloodshed. For each spilt drop
Of blood, O Israel, his doom awaits you!
Can you not melt your heart, and clear your eye
To see his will, and do his will? Let peace
Fall like rain on the lands, and dwell forever
In the homes and hearts of all men! Let the seas
Choir joyfully his love, and the stony wastes,
The desert ways, and the mountain peaks, join voice
To praise his loving kindness! Let the lion
Lie down by the lamb in peace, and the sons of man
Quiet their hatreds into songs of love,
Forge of their spites and rancors a brotherhood
Whole-hearted and eternal! This is his will!

“Then will the laughter of children lift to the sky,

JEHOVAH

The songs of women resound, the flocks and herds
Swell to a king's wealth. Love shall guard the high-
ways,
With joys for her strong men! Day will enter gladly,
And men will mourn her going; night will drip
Out of her restful wings a dreamless sleep,
Joyous and peaceful. Men shall have chance to blos-
som,
In the earth-garden, up to their full stature,
Shaping their lives into songs! This is his will
To all men in his endless brotherhood!"

5

"I envy you your vision," Benaiah said.
"This is a Jehovah that I had not dreamed,
And yet may dream. . . . This, born of a fighting hill-
god!
And out of dreams come deeds. A world at peace!
And if a man believed this—"

"Why, Benaiah!"

Thru the captains a round man waddled, sleek and smil-
ing.
"Not off for Hebron yet?" His quick eye caught
The tattered prophet. "Listening to your doom?
I wonder why Jehovah drives men mad,
Like this poor earnest fellow. He has some purpose—
Tho it is hard on us who have to bear
The froth and fury. Come! I've a shrewd notion
David has something hidden for you, that Joab

THE GOD GROWS

Would give an arm to win! I know Bath-Sheba
And little Solomon will dance when you enter!
Come!"

Benaiah looked back, where the prophet stood
Watching him. He sought to break loose from Zadok.
"I'll follow. I've a whim to question this fellow."

Zadok laughed softly. "I forgot to say
He holds a present for you, that the King of Tyre
Sent down—ten talents of gold, and—I think—
Three handmaids—Tyrians! Abiathar got
But one. No; one is that little slut of Egypt—
Remember? You won't be stingy, will you? . . .
Come!"

Benaiah followed the priest. The captains scattered,
Listening for the trumpet to start the marching.
The soldiers sought new sport. Jotham was alone.

"And this they serve—a beast-god with four heads,
Blood and Honor, Wealth and Lust—and him
They dare to call Jehovah! When will they crush
Each brutish head, and turn to the true god
With earnest hearts? Then will Jehovah come
Into his world-covering brotherhood
Built upon love—and love is the mother of joy,
And joy of beauty—and these are his three names.
When will they come? Great lonely souls may find
them;
But for all men. . . ."

JEHOVAH

He turned to the desert. There,
Alone, he could dwell in love—love of the desert,
Of dumb life, and of Jehovah. Beauty would blossom
In flaming day and the shining sky of night;
Joy would conquer his soul. What if the end
Were a lonely whitened skull and crumbling bones,—
He would have had love and joy and beauty. . . .

Yet northward
Lay the sad kingdom of the forgetful tribes,
Straying, straying bloodily. One bitter smile
At what he taught men, and what they paid their
prophets,—
And then he turned his head from the quiet desert,
And his feet found the familiar northern road.

NOTES

Page 4 I, 19, 20. *Sons of thundering Jehovah*: Budde's argument for the Kenite derivation of the Yahweh (Jehovah) cult is well sustained.—Louis Wallis' "Sociological Study of the Bible" (Chicago, 1912), 82. . . . Expressed in the language of sober historical narration, this covenant is nothing else than an alliance of Israel with the nomad tribe of the Kenites at Sinai, which had as its self-evident condition the adoption of their religion, Yahweh (Jehovah) worship.—Karl Budde's "Religion of Israel to the Exile" (New York, 1899), 24.

Page 15; II, 79. *Hill of Sin*: The general opinion of modern scholars is that the name "Sinai" is derived from the name of the Babylonian moon-god Sin.—Jewish Encyclopedia (New York, 1905), XI, 381.

Page 31; IV, 26. *Asherah of Tyre*: When Yahweh (Jehovah) gradually became Israel's local Baal he became worshiped like the old Canaanite deity, and all the sensuous accompaniments of the Kedeshoth, as well as the presence of the *asherah* or sacred pole, became attached to his cult. But the symbol carried with it the *numen* of the goddess symbolized, and there can be little doubt that Asherah came to be regarded as Yahweh's (Jehovah's) consort.—Encyc. Brit., 11th Ed., XIII, 180a. . . . The name of the tribe of Asher, too, suggests a god,—Asherah's male counterpart. There is no record of Jehovah's consort during pre-Mosaic Kenite days; tho, by analogy with neighboring religions, she probably existed. In the poem she is identified with the later Asherah.

Page 76; VIII, 163. *Ephod, Urim, Thummim*: When the people "inquired of Yahweh" (Jehovah) *they cast lots*. . . . The

NOTES

Urim and Thummim were a kind of sacred dice, cast or shaken before a metallic image called an ephod.—Wallis, *supra*, 78, quoting Judges viii, 24–27 and I Samuel xiv, 38–42.

Page 87; X, 39. *Moses thru the desert*: Refers to the familiar Talmudic legend.

Page 91; X, 136, 137. *A pestilent brood of trouble-makers among the tribes*: As to the nature of these “insurgent” prophets, the following are cited: Their (the literary prophets’) view of the “mishpat” (justice, clan ethics) of Yahweh (Jehovah) rests back on the social experience of Israel in the old, primitive nomadic life of the desert, in the period of the Judges, and in the time of the highland kingdom under Saul. . . . They (passages from Amos and Micah) are the outcries of two very bewildered countrymen, protesting in the name of their ancestral deity against conditions and practices that bear hard on the social class from which Amos and Micah sprang. The prejudice of the small, country property-holder against the wealthy class in the centers of population is so clearly in evidence that it cannot be denied. . . . Although the kings and wealthy officials were denounced by men like Amos, they were supported, on the other hand, by a large and influential class of prophets. . . . It is certain that the Rechabites (a primitive Hebrew sect) were ardent champions of Yahweh (Jehovah). They looked back longingly into earlier ages when the primitive, brotherhood *mishpat* (*supra*) of Yahweh (Jehovah) reigned without dispute among the clans of the desert. The life of these primitive tent-dwellers was a protest against the settled civilization of the ancient world; and many who did not follow their way of life shared their ideals. “I will yet again make thee to dwell in tents,” wrote one of the prophets (Hosea xii, 9).—Wallis, *supra*, 150, 163, 164, 182–183.

Page 97; XI, 26. *Sons of Cain*: Cain, the eponym of the Kenites.—Encyc. Brit., 11th Ed., XI, 584b.

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